al-Mīzān



AL-MĨZÃN

An Exegesis of the Holy Qur'ãn

BY:

al-'Allãmah as-Sayyid Muḥammad
Ḥusayn aṭ-Ṭabãṭabã'ī

VOLUME 2

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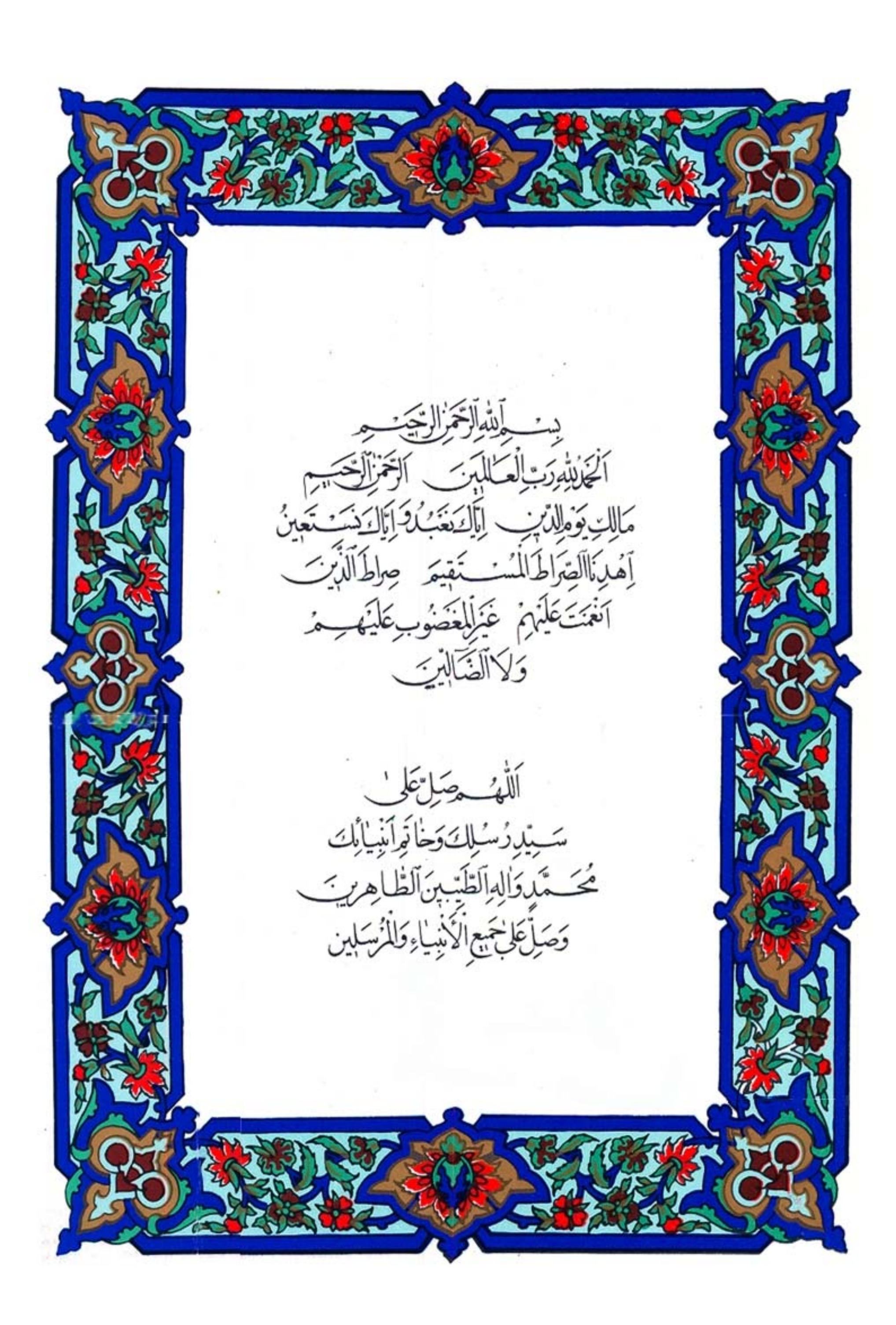
Tehran – IRAN.

In the Name of Allãh,
The All-compassionate, The All-merciful

Praise belongs to Allãh, the Lord of all being;
the All-compassionate, the All-merciful;
the Master of the Day of Judgement;
Thee only we serve, and to Thee alone we pray for succour;
Guide us in the straight path;
the path of those whom Thou hast blessed,
not of those against whom Thou art wrathful,
nor of those who are astray.

* * * * *

O ' Allãh! send your blessings to the head of your messengers and the last of your prophets,
Muhammad and his pure and cleansed progeny.
Also send your blessings to all your prophets and envoys.



بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ
اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ
مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ
اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ
أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ
وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

اَللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلىٰ
سَيِّدِ رُسُلِكَ وَخَاتَمِ أَنْبِيَائِكَ
مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ الطَّيِّبِينَ الطَّاهِرِينَ
وَصَلِّ عَلىٰ جَمِيعِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَالْمُرْسَلِينَ

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TRANSLITERATION

ARABIC LETTERS

Symbol	Transliteration	Symbol	Transliteraion
ء	’	ك	k
ب	b	ل	l
ت	t	م	m
ث	th	ن	n
ج	j	ه	h
ح	ḥ	و	w
خ	kh	ي	y
د	d	ة	**ah, at** (construct
ذ	dh		state)
ر	r	ال	article **al-** and **’l** (even before the antepalatals)
ز	z		
س	s		
ش	sh	**Long Vowels**	
ص	ṣ	آ	ã
ض	ḍ	و	ũ
ط	ṭ	ي	ī
ظ	ẓ		
ع	‘	**Short Vowels**	
غ	gh		a
ف	f		u
ق	q		i

تصدير

١- العلاّمة الشّهير و المفكّر و الفيلسوف الإسلاميّ المعاصر، السّيّد محمّد حسين الطّباطبائي (١٣٢١/١٩٠٤-١٤٠٢/١٩٨١) رحمه الله سبق و أن عرّفناه بعض التّعريف في تصديرنا للجزء الأوّل من التّرجمة الإنجليزيّة للميزان.

٢- اشتهر العلاّمة الطّباطبائي رحمه الله بالعديد من آثاره و أهمّها تفسيره الكبير (الميزان في تفسير القرآن) الّذي يصحّ أن يعدّ الدّعامة الأساسيّة للتّقدير العلميّ الّذي ناله العلاّمة الطّباطبائي في العالم الاسلاميّ.

٣- شعرنا بالضّرورة الملحّة إلى نشر تفسير للقرآن الكريم بالانجليزيّة، وبعد مداولات و استشارات، وقع اختيارنا على (الميزان) لأنّا وجدناه يجمع الى حدّ ما، بين النّقاط الّتي لابدّ منها في تفسير متكامل للقرآن الكريم و بين ما تتطلّبه الذّهنيّة المعاصرة للقارئ المسلم فاقترحنا على الأستاذ العلاّمة السّيّد سعيد أختر رضوي القيام بهذه المهمّة، لما نعهده فيه من القدرة العلميّة على فهم النّصّ العربيّ، و كفاءته الأدبيّة في التّعبير و التّرجمة، و قد اعتمدنا عليه في ذلك، ليكون هو الزّعيم بالتّرجمة الانجليزيّة و المسئول عنها، كما كان العلاّمة الطّباطبائي رحمه الله هو الزّعيم ببحوث الكتاب و المرجع المسئول عنها.

٤– و نحن إذ ننشر (الجزء الثانى من التّرجمة الإنجليزيّـة لتفسير (الميزان) و يطابـق النّصف الثّانى من الجزء الأوّل للنّصّ العربيّ ، لنرجو من الله سبحانه أن يأخذ بأيدينا و يعيننا على إعداد التّرجمة الكاملة للكتاب و نشره. و قد وضعنا قائمتين : (الأولى) بأسماء المؤلّفين الوارد ذكرهم في مجموع أجزاء (الميزان) و (الثّانية) بأسماء الكتب الّتي هي بحاجة إلى التّعريف ، وقد ألحقنا هاتين القائمتين بالجزء الأوّل من التّرجمة الإنجليزيّة ، ولكنّا وضعنا جدولين آخرين يجدهما القارئ ملحقين بكلّ جزء من أجزاء التّرجمة .

* * *

ومن الله سبحانه نسأل ، و اليه نبتهل أن يجعل عملنا خالصا لوجهه الكريم ، و أن يوفّقنا لإتمام ما بدأنا و يسدّدنا في خطوتنا هذه و خطواتنا المقبلة ، إنّه نعم المولى و نعم النّصير .

المؤسّسة العالميّة للخدمات الاسلاميّة
(لجنة التّأليف والتّرجمة والنّشر)
طهران — ايران

١٤٠٤/٦/٢٠
١٩٨٤/٣/٢٤

FOREWORD

1. al-‘Allamah as-Sayyid Muhammad Ḥusayn at-Tabataba᾽i (1321/1904 – 1402/1981) – may Allãh have mercy upon him – was a famous scholar, thinker and the most celebrated contemporary Islamic philosopher. We have introduced him briefly in the first volume of the English translation of *al-Mīzãn*.

2. al-’Allamah at-Tabataba’i is well-known for a number of his works of which the most important is his great exegesis *al Mizan fi Tafsīri ‘l-Qur an* which is rightly counted as the fundamental pillar of scholarly work which the ‘Allamah has achieved in the Islamic world.

3. We felt the necessity of publishing an exegesis of the Holy Qur’ãn in English. After a thorough consultation, we came to choose *al-Mīzãn* because we found that it contained in itself, to a considerable extent, the points which should necessarily be expounded in a perfect exegesis of the Holy Qur’ãn and the points which appeal to the mind of the contemporary Muslim reader. Therefore, we proposed to al-tistadh al-’Allamah as-Sayyid Said Akhtar ar-Radawi to undertake this task because we were familiar with his intellectual ability to understand the Arabic text of *al-Mīzãn* and his literary capability in expression and translation. So we relied on him for this work and consider him responsible for the English translation as al-’Allamah at-Tabataba᾽i was responsible for the Arabic text of *al-Mīzãn* and its discussions.

4. We have now undertaken the publication of the second volume of the English translation of *al-Mīzãn.* This volume corresponds with the second half of the first volume of the Arabic text. With the help of Allãh, the Exalted, we hope to provide the complete translation and publication of this voluminous work.

In the first volume, the reader will find two more appendixes included apart from the two which are to appear in all volumes of the English translation of *al-Mizãn:* One for the authors and the other for the books cited throughout this work.

* * * * *

We implore upon Allãh to effect our work purely for His pleasure, and to help us to complete this work which we have started. May Allãh guide us in this step which we have taken and in the future steps, for He is the best Master and the best Helper.

WORLD ORGANIZATION FOR ISLAMIC SERVICES
(***Board of Writing, Translation and Publication***)

20/6/1404
24/3/1984

Tehran – IRAN.

AL-MĪZÃN

Volume Two

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قُلْ إِنْ كَانَتْ لَكُمُ الدَّارُ الآخِرَةُ عِنْدَ اللهِ خَالِصَةً مِنْ
دُونِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوُا الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ — ٩٤ . وَلَنْ
يَتَمَنَّوْهُ أَبَداً بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَاللهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ — ٩٥ .
وَلَتَجِدَنَّهُمْ أَحْرَصَ النَّاسِ عَلَى حَيَوٰةٍ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا يَوَدُّ
أَحَدُهُمْ لَوْ يُعَمَّرُ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمُزَحْزِحِهِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ
أَنْ يُعَمَّرَ وَاللهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ — ٩٦ . قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوّاً
لِجِبْرِيلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللهِ مُصَدِّقاً لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ
وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ — ٩٧. مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوّاً لِلّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ
وَجِبْرِيلَ وَمِيكَالَ فَإِنَّ اللهَ عَدُوٌّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ — ٩٨. وَلَقَدْ
أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ بِهَا إِلاَّ الْفَاسِقُونَ — ٩٩ .

Say: "If the future abode with Allãh is purely for you to the exclusion of the people then invoke death if you are truthful" (94). *And they will never invoke it on account of what their hands have sent before, and Allãh knows the unjust ones* (95). *And you will most certainly find them the greediest of men for life, and* (greedier) *than even those who are polytheists; every one of them loves that he should be granted a life of a thousand years, and his being granted a long life will in no way remove him*

further off from the chastisement, and Allãh sees what they do (96). *Say: "Whoever is the enemy of Gabriel – for surely he revealed it to your heart by Allãh's Command, verifying that which is before it, and guidance and good news for the believers* (97). *Whoever is the enemy of Allãh and His angels and His apostles and Gabriel and Michael – so surely Allãh is the enemy of the unbelievers"* (98) . *And certainly We have revealed to you clear signs, and none disbelieve in them except the transgressors* (99).

* * * * *

COMMENTARY

QUR'ÃN: *Say: "If the future abode . . . ":* The Jews claimed, *"Fire shall not touch us but for a few days"* (2:80). When they were told to believe in what Allãh had revealed, they declared: *"We believe in that which was revealed to us"* (2:91). All this implied that only they would be saved on the Day of Resurrection to the exclusion of all the others; that their deliverance and happiness in the next world would be unmarred by any unpleasant experience as the Fire shall not touch them but for a few days – equal in number to the day they worshipped the calf. To remove that self-delusion and conceit, Allãh put a challenge to them, to show them their true face, to make them realize that their claims were without any substance. He (Allãh) told His Apostle to say to them: "If the future abode . . . is for you . . ." The "future abode" points to the felicity and happiness of that abode; the owner of a house arranges and manages it in the best possible way, and decorates it according to his taste and liking. "with Allãh", that is, firmly established with Allãh, by His order and His permission; the phrase has the same import here as in the verse: *Surely the religion with Allãh is Islãm* (3:19). "purely", that is, unmixed with punishment or humiliation – utmost that you think possible is a punishment of just a few days. "to the exclusion of the people", because you presume that all religions, except your own, are false. If you really think so, "then invoke death if you are truthful".

This challenge is similar to the one given in verse: *Say: "O you who are Jews, if you think that you are the friends of Allãh to the exclusion of other people, then invoke death if you are truthful"* (62:6). The argument is very clear about which nobody can have any doubt whatsoever. Any man (nay! even an animal having a limited perception and sensitivity), if given total freedom to choose between comfort and discomfort, will at once opt for the comfort, without any hesitation, without any contemplation. Put before him a life polluted with trouble and turmoil and another clean and pure, and tell him to take hold of any one; naturally, and without any doubt, he will grab at the pure one. If for any reason he is prevented from the life of his choice, he will always dream of it, and will remain looking for any opportunity to lay his hands upon it.

If the Jews are truthful in their claim that the other world's pure happiness belongs to them to the exclusion of others, then they must yearn for it with their hearts, words and deeds.

"And they will never invoke it on account of what their hands have sent before", for example, the killings of the prophets, the disbelief in Mũsã (a.s.) and breaking of the covenants, "and Allãh knows the unjust ones".

QUR'ÃN: *on account of what their hands have sent before:* It is a metaphorical reference to the "deeds". Most of the external deeds are done by hands; then the finished product is sent to the one who wants it or may benefit from it.

The sentence has two allegorical allusions: it counts every deed as having been done by hands; and it ascribes the action of "sending" to the hands while in fact it is the man who sends his deeds before.

Actions of a man, and especially those done regularly, are a clear mirror of his unconscious and sub-conscious personality. Evil deeds expose the evil nature of the doer – and such a nature does not like meeting its Lord or staying in the abode of His friends.

QUR'ÃN: *And you will most certainly find them the greediest of men for life:* It is an explanation of the divine word, "And they will never invoke it . . ." They do not yearn for death because they are greediest of all men for the life of this world. It is this greed and avid craving to remain in this world which prevents them from looking forward to the next abode. The word, "life", is used in this verse as a common noun – it is to show how insignificant and trifling this life is; Allãh has said: *And this life of the world is nothing but a sport and a play, and as for the next abode, that most surely is life – did they but know* (29:64).

QUR'ÃN: *and* (greedier) *that even those who are polytheists:* Apparently the conjunctive, "and", joins this clause to the word, "men", that is, you will find them greedier than even the polytheists for life.

QUR'ÃN: *and his being granted a long life will in no way remove him further off from the chastisement:* The verse's literal translation: and it is not a remover of him from the chastisement his being granted a long life. *"mã"* (ما = not, no, particle of negation); the pronoun "it" is that of *sha'n* and *qiṣṣah* (ضَميرُ الشّأن و القصّة) "his being granted a long life" is the subject preceded by the predicate, that is, "is not a remover of him . . ."

The sentence may also be syntactically analysed in another way: the pronoun, "it", may refer to the love each of them had of being granted a life of a thousand years. It would accordingly mean that that love of theirs would not ward off the Divine Chastisement from them; in this case, the clause, "his being granted a long life" will be a description of that love.

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* *Sha'n* (ضَميرُ الشّأن) is a personal pronoun (third person, masculine) which is used to begin a sentence. That of feminine gender is called the pronoun of *qiṣṣah* (ضَمير القصّة). The nearest thing to it in the English grammer is the indefinite demonstrative pronoun. (tr.)

Anyhow, what the verse says is this: They shall never invoke the death, and I swear that you will most certainly find them the greediest of men for this base and insignificant life which prevents them from the happy and good life of the next abode; you will find them greedier than even the polytheists for this life, although the latter do not believe in the Resurrection and the Day of Judgment, and consequently their love for this life should be unparalleled; every one of them loves that he should be granted the longest life, but even the longest life cannot remove him further off from the Divine Chastisement, because life, no matter how long it is, is limited and has to come to an end.

QUR'ÃN: *every one of them loves that he should be granted a life of a thousand years:* that is, the longest life. "a thousand" is used to denote numerousness. In Arabic, it is the highest denomination which is described by a single word. Higher denominations are shown by repetition and combination, for example, ten thousand, a hundred thousand, a thousand thousand (i.e., a million).

QUR'ÃN: *And Allãh sees what you do: "al-Baṣīr"* (البَصيرُ) is one of the beautiful names of Allãh; it signifies that although He does not have a body or an eye, He is fully cognizant of all things which we perceive with our eyes. It shows a facet of the name, *al-'Alīm* (العَلِيْمُ = the Knowing).

QUR'ÃN: *Say: "Whoever is the enemy of Gabriel – for surely he revealed it to your heart by Allãh's Command:* Apparently the verse was revealed as a reply to something the Jews had said – they arrogantly refused to believe in what was revealed to the Apostle of Allãh (s.a.w.a.), on the pretext that they were enemies of Gabriel who had the charge of bringing the revelation to Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). Allãh replied to them in two verses – concerning the Qur'ãn and Gabriel both. Also the traditions giving the background of the verses confirm it. The verses contain four replies to their arrogance in denial of the Qur'ãn.

First: Gabriel has revealed the Qur'ãn to your heart by Allãh's Command, not by his own wish. Therefore, even if they feel enmity towards Gabriel, it should not prevent them from believing in a revelation sent down by Allãh's Command.

Second: The Qur'ãn verifies the Divine Book which was revealed before it and which they have in their hands. How can they believe in a book and deny another which verifies it?

Third: The Qur'ãn is a guidance for those who believe in it.

Fourth: It is also a good news for the believers. How can a sane person turn his face away from guidance and good news, even if it is brought to him by a supposed enemy of his?

So far as their professed enmity towards Gabriel was concerned, they were replied as follows:

Gabriel is one of the angels of Allãh; he has no authority except to follow and obey the Divine Command – just like Michael and other angels. They are honoured servants of Allãh; they do not disobey His command, and they do as they are told. Likewise, the apostles of Allãh have no authority except by Allãh and from Allãh. To have enmity towards them, to harbour hatred for them is enmity and hatred towards Allãh Himself. Therefore, whoever is the enemy of Allãh and His angels and His apostles and Gabriel and Michael, so surely Allãh is his enemy.

All these replies are clearly given in these two verses.

QUR'ÃN: *for surely he revealed it to your heart by Allãh's Command:* Apparently, it should have been "to my heart"; instead, it says, "to your heart". The pronoun has been changed from the first to the second person to draw attention to an important factor: So far as the revelation of the Qur'ãn is concerned, neither Gabriel has any choice or authority of his own in bringing it down (he is subject to the Divine command, which he faith-fully carries out) nor the Apostle of Allãh (s. a.w. a.) has any choice or authority of his own in receiving it and conveying it to his *ummah;* his heart is the receptacle of revelation, on which he has no control at all and which he is bound to convey to his people.

The Jews have been mentioned in these verses sometimes in the second person, and sometimes in the third. Their admonition and condemnation has continued for a long time; and the Speaker wants to show that they do not deserve the honour of being addressed by Him. That is why He frequently changes the styles, again and again going from the second to the third person pronouns. The audience gets the impression that the Speaker does not like to speak to them – because of their heedlessness and depravity, but at the same time does not like to leave them as they are without pronouncing His judgment against them.

QUR'ÃN: *the enemy of the unbelievers:* Instead of saying, "their enemy", the verse uses the word, "enemy of the unbelievers"; it serves to show also the reason of that enmity. Allãh is their enemy, because they are unbelievers, and Allãh is the enemy of the unbelievers.

QUR'ÃN: *and none disbelieve in them except the transgressors:* It explains the cause of their disbelief; they disbelieve because they are transgressors. Or, may be the definite article "the", in "the transgressors" refers to the group mentioned in the beginning of the chapter: *but He does not cause to err by it* (any) *except the transgressors, who break the covenant of Allãh after its confirmation . . .* (2:26-27)

As for Gabriel and how he brought the revelation to the heart of the Apostle of Allãh (s. a.w. a.) , we shall explain it, God willing, in another place; the same applies to Michael and other angels.

TRADITIONS

Ibn ''Abbãs explained the reason of the revelation of the verse, *Say: "Whoever is the enemy of Gabriel. . .",* in these words: "When the Prophet came to Medina, Ibn Suriya and some Jews of Fadak asked him (some questions). They said: 'O Muhammad! How do you sleep? Because we have been told about the sleep of the Prophet who would come in the last days?'

He said: 'My eyes sleep while my heart is awake.' They said: 'You are right, O Muhammad! Now tell us about the child whether it is from the man or from the woman?' He said: 'As for the bones, the nerves and the veins, they are from the man; and as for the flesh, the blood, the nails and the hairs, they are from the woman.' They said: 'You are right, O Muhammad! Then why is it that sometimes the child resembles his paternal uncles, without having a least likeness of his maternal uncles? And sometimes he resembles his maternal uncles without having any likeness at all to his paternal uncles?' He replied: 'He resembles to that parent's (side) whose fluid dominates the other's.' They said: 'You spoke the truth, O Muhammad! Now, tell us about your Lord, what is He?' Then Allãh revealed (the Chapter 112) : *Say: "He, Allãh is One . . ."* Then Ibn Suriya said: 'One (more) thing; if you tell (us) about it, I shall believe in you and follow you. Which angel is it that brings to you that which Allãh reveals to you?' He said: 'Gabriel.' (Ibn Suriya) said: 'He is our enemy; he brings the (order of) fighting, hard-ship and war. And Michael brings comfort and happiness. Had it been Michael who came to you (with revelation) we would have believed in you.' "

The author says: Very many traditions (nearly *mutawãtir* in number) have been narrated by both Sunni and Shi'ah narrators, that (when) the Apostle of Allãh (s. a.w. a.) (slept) his eyes used to sleep but his heart kept awake. Sleep did not make him unaware of himself; when asleep, he was well aware that he was asleep; when he dreamt he knew that he was dreaming. Not too often, this happens to some other good persons too when their souls are clean and they keep in touch with the Divine sublimity. When the soul rises to that level, it can never be oblivious of the various changes occurring to itself in its worldly life, nor can it forget its relation to its Lord. At this stage, it may look at the world and its life taking the whole spectrum at one glance, as a man looks at a tree and perceives it all at once. In this detached manner, it observes that all human beings are asleep – not only those who are manifestly asleep, but those too who are thought to be awake.

Almost all men have taken shelter under sensual perception; have bound themselves to the fetters of materialism. They are in fact asleep, even when they think they are awake. 'Ali (a.s.) has said: "The people are asleep; when they die they will wake up . . ."

This topic will be further explained in other place; other sentences of this tradition too will be explained later

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أَوَكُلَّمَا عَاهَدُوا عَهْداً نَبَذَهُ فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لاَ
يُؤْمِنُونَ — ١٠٠ . وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِمَا
مَعَهُمْ نَبَذَ فَرِيقٌ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ كِتَابَ اللهِ وَرَاءَ
ظُهُورِهِمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ لاَ يَعْلَمُونَ — ١٠١ .

What! whenever they make a covenant, a party of them cast it aside? Nay, most of them do not believe (100). *And when there came to them an Apostle from Allãh verifying that which they have, a party of those who were given the Book threw the Book of Allãh behind their backs as if they knew nothing* (101).

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COMMENTARY

QUR'ÃN: *cast it aside: "an-Nabdh"* (النَّبْذ) to throw away, to renounce).

QUR'ÃN: *And when there came to them an Apostle from Allãh . . .* : The word, "an Apostle", definitely means the Apostle of Allãh, Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) ; it does not refer to any other apostle who might have come "verifying that which they have", because "when there came" does not mean "whenever there came"; in other words, it does not signify a recurring incidence, but an event that happened once only.

The verse points to the Jews' adverse attitude towards the truth: they were so steeped in falsehood that they concealed the foretellings of the Torah about the Prophet of Islam, and refused to believe in the Qur'ãn which verified that which they hod in their hands.

* * * * *

وَاتَّبَعُوا مَا تَتْلُوا الشَّيَاطِينُ عَلَىٰ مُلْكِ سُلَيْمَانَ وَمَا كَفَرَ
سُلَيْمَانُ وَلَٰكِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ كَفَرُوا يُعَلِّمُونَ النَّاسَ السِّحْرَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ
عَلَى الْمَلَكَيْنِ بِبَابِلَ هَارُوتَ وَمَارُوتَ وَمَا يُعَلِّمَانِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ
حَتَّىٰ يَقُولَا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُمَا
مَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بِهِ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهِ وَمَا هُمْ بِضَارِّينَ بِهِ مِنْ
أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ
وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُوا لَمَنِ اشْتَرَاهُ مَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَاقٍ وَلَبِئْسَ مَا
شَرَوْا بِهِ أَنْفُسَهُمْ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ــ ١٠٢. وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا
وَاتَّقَوْا لَمَثُوبَةٌ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ــ ١٠٣ .

And they followed what the satans chanted (of sorcery) against the kingdom of Sulaymãn; and Sulaymãn was not an unbeliever, but the satans disbelieved; they taught men sorcery and what was sent down to the two angels at Babylon, Hãrũt and Mãrũt. Yet these two taught no one until they had said: "Surely we are only a trial, therefore do not be a disbeliever." Even then men learned from these two, that by which they might cause a separation between a man and his wife; and they cannot hurt with it any one except with Allãh's permission; and they learned what harmed them

and did not profit them; and certainly they knew that he who bought it should have no share (of good) *in the hereafter, and vile was the price for which they sold their souls; had they but known* (this) (102). *And if they had believed and guarded themselves* (against evil), *reward from Allãh would certainly have been better; had they but known* (this) (103).

* * * * *

COMMENTARY

QUR'ÃN: *And they followed what the satans chanted* . . . The exegetes have disputed among themselves about each and every aspect of this verse; so much so that the resulting picture of the differences is almost unparalleled in the whole Qur'ãn. A list of the differences is given below:

"they followed ": Does the pronoun, "they", refer to the Jews of the Sulaymãn's time, or to those at the time of the Prophet, or to all?

"chanted": The Arabic word is *"tatlu"* (تَتْلوْا) which may be translated as "chanted", "recited", "told a lie about", "faked" or "followed and acted according to". In which sense the word is used here? Every meaning has some supporters.

"satans": Does it refer to the satans of *jinn?* Or to those among the human beings? Or to both?

"about": The Arabic participle is " '*alã* "(عَلى = against, on, about, upon). Does the phrase mean, about the kingdom of Sulaymãn? Or, during the reign of Sulaymãn? Or, against his kingdom? Or, on his reign?

"the satans disbelieved" : Some say, they disbelieved because they published the sorcery among the people. Others say, they disbelieved because they ascribed the sorcery to Sulaymãn. Still others say, the disbelief, as mentioned here, actually means sorcery.

"they taught men sorcery": It means they instructed them as a teacher instructs his students. No! it means that they buried the chants under Sulaymãn's chair, and then directed the men to it who brought it out and learnt it.

"and what was sent down": The word translated here as "what" is *"mã"* (مَا) which is a relative pronoun ("what"); also, it is a particle of negation ("not"). "And" is mostly used as a conjunctive; but not infrequently, it is also used to begin a new sentence. A group says that *"mã"* means "what", and the conjunctive joins it to "what the satans chanted" (the Jews followed what was sent down). Another party is of the opinion that the conjunctive joins it to "sorcery" (the satans taught them sorcery and that which was sent down). A third group thinks that *"mã"* means "not", and the word "and" begins a new sentence (And sorcery was not sent down to the two angels, contrary to what the Jews claimed).

"sent down": Was it sent down from the heavens? Or from the highlands?

"the two angels": They were the angels from the heaven. No! They were two good men, or men who feigned to be good. No! It is not *"al-malakayn"* (المَلَكَيْن = two angels) ; it is *"al-malikayn"* (المَلِكَيْن = two kings).

"Babylon": It is the famous ancient city of Iraq. No! It is a city in Damawand (Iran); Wrong! It is the land between Naṣibayn (Turkey) and Ra'sul 'Ayn.

"these two taught no one": Teaching is used in its common meaning of instruction. No! It means, these two apprised no one.

"do not be a disbeliever" : By learning sorcery? Or, by practising it? Or, by both?

"the men learned from these two": The "two" refers to the two angels. No! It means, they learned from the two subjects, sorcery and disbelief. Wrong! They learned the practice of sorcery, in place of the advice given by the angels.

"that by which they might cause a separation between a man and his wife": Some exegetes say that they caused love or hate between the couple with the help of their sorcery. Others think that they misled one of the spouses to disbelief and polytheism, and the apostasy caused the separation mentioned here. A third group say that they created hatred and enmity between the couple with their calumny and

slander.

This, in short, gives a glimpse of the differences of opinions concerning the explanations of the words and clauses of the verse. There are still more differences about the event referred to – whether it narrates an actual happening or is just a parable; and so on and so forth. Compute the differences mentioned above and you will get nearly one million and two hundred sixty thou-sand possible explanations ($4 \times 3^9 \times 2^4$)!!

It seems an astounding quality of the Qur'ãn, that a verse that is subjected to so many divergent interpretations, still maintains its highest standard of eloquence; that in spite of all these vagaries of the exegetes, its meaning is not disjointed, nor its beauty marred.

A similar treatment has been meted out to the verse: *Is he then who has with him clear proof from his Lord, and a witness from him recites it and before it* (*is*) *the Book of Musã, a guide and a mercy* (11:17).

However, it appears from the context that this verse deals with a hitherto unmentioned affair of the Jews, that is, their wide-spread use of sorcery. They based this practice on one or two stories, which were very popular among them.

The Jews were addicted to making alterations and inter-polations in, and omissions from, their Divine books, let alone the historical narrations. They used to change their books and records fitting them to the prevalent moods of their times. A story narrated by them was not to be relied upon. But this Qur'ãnic admonition is based on their own belief, because it was they who used to narrate these stories.

The verse proves that the practice of sorcery was prevalent among the Jews, and that they ascribed it to Sulaymãn (a.s.). They presumed that Sulaymãn (a.s.) got the kingdom and sub-jugated the *jinn,* the human beings, the animals and the birds – all with the help of sorcery; and all the supernatural miraculous events related to him depended on witchcraft. And they claimed that some of the enchantments in their hands had come down to them from him. The remaining portion was attributed to the two angels at Babylon, named Hãrũt and Marũt.

The Qur'ãn refutes the stories, saying that the prophet

Sulaymãn (a.s.) never indulged in witchcraft and sorcery. How could he, when sorcery was nothing but disbelief in Allãh? Sulaymãn (a.s.) could not be an unbeliever as he was a sinless, innocent prophet. All this is clearly seen from the words of Allãh: "and Sulaymãn was not an unbeliever, but the satans disbelieved, they taught men sorcery"; "and certainly they knew that he who bought it should have no share (of good) in the hereafter". Sulaymãn's position was too distinguished, his rank too high, and his name too sacred to be associated with disbelief and sorcery. He was the prophet whose outstanding position has been eulogized in several places in the chapters of Meccan period, long before this Chapter of the Cow was revealed. See, for example, the chapters of the Cattle (6th), the Prophets (21st), the Ant (27th) and Sad (38th). You shall find therein that Sulaymãn (a.s.) was an excellent servant of Allãh, a prophet and an apostle; Allãh gave him the knowledge and the wisdom; and granted him a kingdom which was not fit for any one after him. Obviously, Sulaymãn could not indulge in sorcery; it was just a mythical story invented by the satans, which they dictated to their human friends; and it was the satans who disbelieved because they misguided the men by teaching them sorcery.

As for the story of the two angels at Babylon, the Qur'ãnic stand is as follows:

The two angels, Hãrũt and Maria, were certainly given some sorcery as a means of test and trial for the human beings – and no objection could be raised against that; after all, Allãh has taught the human nature the ways of evil too in order that He may test them with it. Likewise, sorcery was sent down to the two angels; but they did not teach it to anyone until they had said to him: Surely we are only a trial, therefore do not become a disbeliever by using it for wrongful purposes; you must use it only to nullify the effect of witchcraft, to expose the viles of the sorcerers and things like that. But the men learned from them that by which they might destroy the domestic peace and turn the love between husband and wife – the best of the things ingrained in human nature – into hatred, causing a

separation between them. Also they learned what harmed them and did not benefit them.

The verse therefore may be explained as follows:

And they (i.e., the Jews coming after the reign of Sulaymãn – every generation passing on the legacy to the later one) followed what the satans from among the *jinn* faked and lied about the kingdom of Sulaymãn. *"Tatlũ"* (تَتْلُوْا = translated here as recited or chanted) actually has the connotation of "lied about " or "faked about", because it is followed by the preposition " *'alã* "(عَلٰى = on) which has changed its semantic value. Why do we say that the satans were from the *jinn?* The following two verses read together provide the answer to this question: *And of the satans there were those who dived for him and did other work beside that, and We kept guard over them* (21:82); *and when he fell down, the jinn came to know plainly that if they had known the unseen, they would not have tarried in abasing torment* (34:14). The first verse shows that the satans were reduced to subjection by Sulaymãn (a.s.) who kept them away from mischief by assigning to them very heavy task; and the second verse refers to the same slavish group as the *jinn.*

QUR'ÃN: *and Sulaymãn was not an unbeliever:* "and" is used here in the meaning of "while". Sulaymãn did not indulge in sorcery; therefore, it was not he who disbelieved; rather it was the satans who disbelieved, because they misled the people by teaching them sorcery.

QUR'ÃN: *and what was sent down:* The Jews followed that which was sent down – through inspiration – to the two angels at Babylon, Hãrũt and Mãrũt. Yet these two did not teach any one any thing of the sorcery, without warning him not to practice it. They admonished every one who wanted to learn sorcery: Surely we are only a trial for you. What we teach you is but a means of test for you. Beware! Don't become an unbeliever by practising sorcery.

QUR'ÃN: *Even then men learned from these two*: that is, from

the two angels, Hãrũt and Maria. “that by which they might cause a separation”, that is, the sorcery which caused separation “between a man and his wife”.

QUR’ÃN: *and they cannot hurt with it any one except with Allãh’s permission:* It is a parenthetic sentence, to remove a possible misunderstanding: One could assume, on hearing that the sorcerers caused separation between a husband and his wife, that the sorcerers were powerful enough to disturb the divinely ordained arrangement of the world; that they could undo the Divine Decree and change the system created by Allãh. This sentence clears the air and emphasizes the fact that sorcery draws its strength from the Divine Decree; it cannot affect any thing but with the permission of Allãh. Therefore, the sorcerers act within the framework of the system designed by Allãh.

This sentence was placed where it is because only the preceding sentence (*that by which they might cause a separation . . .*) mentions the effect of sorcery. Therefore, it was explained that whatever effect it had was based on the permission of Allãh. The following clause (*and they learned what harmed them and did not profit them*) *is* not concerned with this aspect of sorcery, and the above-mentioned clarifying parenthetic sentence, if placed after it, would have looked out of place.

QUR’ÃN: *and certainly they knew that he who bought it should have no share* (of good) *in the hereafter:* They knew it because their reason and intellect told them that the sorcery was the most wicked source of disorder in the society. Also, they were made aware of it by Mũsã (a.s.) when he had said: *and the magician shall not be successful wheresoever he may come from* (20:69).

QUR’ÃN: *and vile was the price for which they sold their souls; had they but known* (this): They knew that sorcery was bad for them and ruinous for their future abode; yet it was as though they did not know it – because they did not act according to their knowledge. If a knowledge fails to lead the knower to the straight

path, then it is not knowledge; it is ignorance. Allãh says: *Have you then seen him who takes his low desire for his god, and Allãh has made him err in spite of* (his) *knowledge . . .* (45:23). Therefore, it was completely in order to wish for them know-ledge and guidance, even if they had had the knowledge before.

QUR'ÃN: *And if they had believed and guarded themselves . . . .:* If they had followed the dictates of belief and piety, instead of following the satans' yarns and practising sorcery which is nothing short of disbelief, they would have got its reward from Allãh. This verse indicates that the disbelief emanating from sorcery is a disbelief within the sphere of action, like that which results from withholding *zakãt;* it is not a disbelief within the sphere of faith. Had the sorcery been a disbelief within the sphere of faith, Allãh would have only said, "And if they believed", without adding "and guarded themselves (against evil)". The Jews had believed, no doubt; but they did not guard themselves against evil and did not desist from the things forbidden by Allãh; therefore, Allãh did not attach any importance, any value, to their belief, and they were called the disbelievers.

QUR'ÃN : *reward from Allãh would certainly have been better; had they but known* (this): that is, better than the rewards and profits they seek through sorcery and amass through disbelief.

TRADITIONS

al Bãqir (a.s.) said, *inter alia,* explaining the words of Allãh, *And they followed what the satans chanted* (of sorcery) *against the kingdom of Sulaymãn . . ..:* "When Sulaymãn died, Iblīs invented sorcery and wrote it in a book; then folding it, wrote on its back: 'This is the valuable treasure of knowledge which Asif ibn Barkhiya produced for the king Sulaymãn ibn Dãwũd. Whoever wanted such and such thing, should do so and so.' Then he buried it under his throne. Thereafter, he unearthed it for the Jews and recited it (before them). The disbelievers said: 'Sulaymãn had not

gained supremacy over us but because of this.' And the believers said: 'Nay! He was a servant of Allãh and His prophet.' Thus Allãh, Great is His remembrance! said: *And they followed what the satans chanted* (of sorcery) *against the kingdom of Sulaymãn."* (*at-Tafsīr,* al-'Ayyãshi, al-Qummi)

The author says: This tradition says that it was the Satan, that is, Iblīs, who invented sorcery and wrote and recited it. There is no discrepancy between this statement and the verse under discussion which ascribes these things to the satans from among the *jinn.* Even their deeds are ultimately attributed to the Iblīs, because he is the source of all evil; it is he who instigates his friends to wickedness and evil. Such usage is common in the traditions.

It appears from this tradition that the verb, *"tatlu"* in this verse is derived from *"at tilãwah"* (التِّلاوَةُ = to recite, to chant). It not in conflict with the interpretation given by us in the commentary that it gives the meaning of "lied about" or "faked about"; because, as we said there, this connotation emerges from the preposition, " *'alã* " which has changed its semantic value. The sentence, therefore, may be interpreted as follows: The satans chanted the sorcery, reciting it, and faking it, lying about the kingdom of Sulaymãn.

Etymologically, *talã, yatlũ, tilãwatan* (تَلا ، يَتلوا ، تِلاوَةً) returns to *waliya, yali, wilãyatan* (وَلِي ، يَلِي ، وِلايَةً) which has the semantic value of being near to, governing and following; one owns a thing gradually, one part following the other – reciting is called *at-tilawah* simply because in recitation one word follows the other.

A fuller discourse of this subject will be given under the verse: *Verily, your guardian is only Allãh and His Apostle and those who believe, those who establish prayer and pay zakãt while they bow down* (5:58).

ar-Riḍã (a.s.) said, *inter alia,* in his discussion with al-Ma'mũn: "And as for Hãrũt and Marũt, they were two angels; they taught sorcery to the people in order that they could protect themselves from the enchantments of the sorcerers, and could

nullify their devices. And they did not teach any one any (enchantment) until they had said to him: *'Surely we are only a trial, therefore do not be a disbeliever.'* But a group became disbelievers by practising what they were warned against; and they caused a separation between a man and his wife with their practice (of sorcery). Allãh has said: *and they cannot hurt with it any one except with Allãh's permission."* (*'Uyunu 'l-akhbãr*)

ON SOME SPURIOUS TRADITIONS

Ibn Jarir has narrated from Ibn ''Abbãs that he said: "Whenever Sulaymãn wanted to enter the toilet or to attend to some of his affairs, he gave his ring to al-Jaradah, his wife. When Allãh decided to test Sulaymãn in the way He tested him, one day Sulaymãn gave his ring (as usual) to al-Jarãdah. Then Satan came to her in the likeness of Sulaymãn and said: 'Give me my ring.' So he took it and put it on. As soon as he did so, the satans (from the *jinn* and the human beings) came under his control. Then came Sulaymãn and said to her: 'Give me my ring.' She said: 'You are a liar; you are not Sulaymãn.' So Sulaymãn knew that it was a trial to test him. The satans got a free hand, and wrote, in those very days, some books containing enchantments and disbelief, and buried them under the chair of Sulaymãn. Thereafter they unearthed them and recited them before the people. And they said: 'It was because of these books that Sulaymãn dominated over the people.' Thus the people avoided Sulaymãn and accused him of disbelief. (It continued) until Allãh sent Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and revealed to him: *and Sulaymãn was not an unbeliever, but the satans disbelieved."* (*ad-Durru '1-manthũr*)

The author says: This story is found in other traditions too. It is a long story forming a part of a multitude purporting to show the supposed sins and mistakes of the prophets.

Said ibn Jarir and al-Khaṭīb (in his *at-Tãrīkh*) have quoted Nãfi' as saying: "I went on a journey with Ibn 'Umar. When the

night was coming to its end, he said: 'O Nãfi'! Look at the red star*, has it risen?' Twice or thrice I said: 'No.' Then I said: 'It has risen.' He said: 'No welcome to it!' I said: 'Praise the Lord! (It is but) a star, subjugated, obedient (and) submissive!' He said: 'I have not told you except that which I heard the Apostle of Allãh (s.a.w.a.) saying. He said: "The angels (once) said: 'O Lord! How doest Thou bear with the mistakes and sins of the children of Ãdam?' (Allãh) said: 'I have put them to trial and given them some dispensation.' They said: 'If we were in their place, we would not have disobeyed Thee.' He said: 'Then select (for trial) two angels from among yourselves.' They spared no effort in the selection and (finally) selected Hãrũt and Mãrũt. They came down (to the earth) ; and Allãh created in them the lust." (At this juncture, Nãfi' said: 'And what is lust?' He said: 'Sexual urge.') "Then there came a woman, az-Zuhrah (i.e., Venus) by name, and both felt attracted towards her, each concealing his feeling from his companion. Then one of them asked the other: 'Do you feel in your heart what I do in mine?' The other said: 'Yes!' Thereupon, they asked her for themselves. She said: 'I will not give you power (over myself) until you teach me the name by which you ascend to, and descend from, the heaven.' They refused to do so. Then they asked her again; and again she refused. At last they did (teach her the name). When she flew (to the heaven), Allãh effaced her into a star and cut her wings. Then the (two angels) sought pardon from Allãh; and He gave them an option, saying: 'If it is your wish, I shall let you return to the position you held before, and then you shall be punished on the Day of Resurrection. Or, if you wish, I shall chastise you in this world, and when the Day of Resurrection comes you shall be reinstated to your previously held position.' So one of them said to the other: 'The punishment of this world will come to an end and will be short-lived.'

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* The red star refers to the Mars, but as will be seen later, Ibn 'Umar is supposed to talk about the Venus. Obviously, the man who forged this "tradition" did not know the difference between the Mars and the Venus. (*tr.*)

Therefore, they opted for this world's chastisement against the punishment of the next world. And Allãh revealed to them to go to Babylon. They went there and the earth swallowed them up; they are hanging upside-down between the heaven and the earth, undergoing punishment up to the Day of Resurrection." ' " (*ad-Durru 'l-manthũr*)

The author says: Something like this has been narrated in some Shī'ah books too from al-Bãqir (a.s.). aṣ-Ṣuyũṭī, the Sunni traditionalist, has narrated more than twenty traditions of the same theme about Hãrũt, Mãrũt and the Venus; some of those traditions have been confirmed as having "correct" chains of narrators; and the chains end on various companions, like Ibn ''Abbãs, Ibn Mas'ũd, 'Ali, Abud-Dardã', 'Umar, 'Ã'ishah and Ibn 'Umar.

These are fictitious stories, which collectively ascribe to the angels of Allãh the worst type of polytheism and the most heinous sins, that is, idol-worship, murder, fornication and liquor-drinking. Could the angels indulge in such sins, when they are known to be the honoured servants of Allãh who are purified from all sins and mistakes? And they accuse the planet Venus to be a woman of loose character, who was transformed into a luminary body – have you ever heard of such a punishment!! – while it is known to be a heavenly body, free from any defect in its creation or any flaw in its system; a planet by which Allãh swears in the Qur'ãn: *But nay! I swear by the stars that run their course* (and) *hide themselves . . .* (81:15-16). Moreover, the astronomy has today unveiled its reality, and found out in detail the elements it is made of, as well as their quantity and combination – in short all matters related to it.

This story, like that given earlier (about Sulaymãn and his ring), is in complete agreement with the legends popular among the Jews. They remind one of the Greek mythology related to the stars and the planets.

A discerning reader will agree that these traditions, like those slandering and defaming the prophets and apostles, are but a few samples of the intrigues and machinations of the Jews.

Their prevalence in the Muslims' books of traditions is a living proof of the hold they held on the Muslims' minds in the early days of Islam. The Jews toyed with the Muslim traditions in any way they liked; and the Muslim traditionalists were their willing partners in these interpolations.

But Allãh has kept His Book under His Own protection. The enemies of truth cannot play with it. Whenever one of their satans tries to steal a hearing he is chased away by a visible flame. Allãh has said: *Surely We have revealed the Reminder and We will most certainly be its guardian* (15:9) ; *and most surely it is a Mighty Book: Falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it; a revelation from the Wise, the Praised One* (41:41- 42) ; *And We reveal of the Qur'ãn that which is a healing and mercy to the believers, and it adds only to the perdition of the unjust* (17:82). The promise given in these verses is unconditional. Every interpolation, every alteration is repulsed by the Qur'ãn. The Book of Allãh unmasks the true face of the interpolators, adding to their perdition. Also, the Apostle of Allãh (s.a.w.a.) has said: "Whatever is in conformity with the Book of Allãh, take it; and whatever is against it, leave it." The *ummah* has been given this frame of reference; it is this yardstick with which all the traditions attributed to the Prophet and his *Ahlu 'l-bayt* are to be measured. The Qur'ãn removes every falsehood and exposes every deception. Allãh says: *Nay! We cast the truth against falsehood, so that it breaks its head, and lo! it vanishes* (21:18) ; *and Allãh desired to manifest the truth of what was true by His words . . . that He may manifest the truth of what was true and show the falsehood of what was false, even though the guilty ones disliked* (8:7-8). Allãh confirms the truth and erases the falsehood by showing the true faces of both.

Some people, and especially those with materialistic out-look, who are overawed by the western civilization, have used the above-mentioned historical fact as a pretext to throw away all the traditions attributed to the Prophet. They looked at some traditionalists and al-Haruriyyah and found that they accepted every tradition – without any scrutiny whatsoever. They reacted to it by going to the other extreme and rejecting every tradition – without any scrutiny

whatsoever.

It needs not much intelligence to realize that the total acceptance of the traditions is as bad as its total rejection. Its unconditional acceptance nullifies the standard laid down for the purpose of differentiating between the truth and the falsehood; and encourages one to ascribe lies to the Prophet. Likewise, its indiscriminate rejection casts aside the said standard and leads one to the rejection of the Book of Allãh itself – the Mighty Book that falsehood does not come to it from before it nor from behind it. Allãh has said in this Book: *and whatever the Apostle gives you, take it; and from whatever he forbids you, keep back* (59:7); *And We did not send any apostle but that he should be obeyed by Allãh's permission* (4:64). If the sayings of the Prophet had no authority, or if his words – reported to his contemporaries who were absent from his gathering or to the generations coming after his time – had no validity then nothing of the religion could survive at all.

Man by his instinct relies and accepts the reports brought by others – he cannot survive without it. As for the alterations and interpolations, it is not a disease peculiar to the traditions of the Prophet. The society depends on the reported news and information; and the motives to tell lies, to make changes and alterations to suit one's purpose, to twist the words and to quote them out of context, are much more stronger in the case of the worldly affairs. So, what do we do? Do we reject all reports and information? No! We scrutinize every report with the help of some well-established and relevant standard; what passes the test, is accepted as truth; and that which fails is thrown aside as falsehood; and if no clear result emerges from the test, if we are unable to decide whether the report was true or not, we reserve our judgment – as our nature tells us to do in such cases.

The above procedure is applied regarding the subjects we have some expertise about. As for a subject outside our specialty, the common practice is to refer it to the specialists in that field and accept their judgment.

This is, in short, the dictate of human nature for the smooth running of the society. The self same system is adhered to

in religion for distinguishing truth from falsehood. The litmus-paper of this test is the Book of Allãh – if a tradition conforms to it, its truth is confirmed; if it clearly goes against it, its false-hood is known; and if no definite stand may be taken because of some ambiguities, then the judgment is reserved. This system has been explained in the *mutawãtir* traditions of the Prophet and the Imãms (of the *Ahlu 'l-bayt – a.s.*). It applies to all the traditions that are not concerned with jurisprudence; as for those dealing with the law and jurisprudence, they are governed by the Principles of Jurisprudence.

A PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE ON SORCERY AND WITCHCRAFT

It is a common knowledge that many unusual events do take place which are outside the frame of the established natural system. It is difficult to find someone who has not seen, or heard about, some abnormal or seemingly supernatural events. But we find after scrutiny that most of them are not enigmatic and mysterious at all; rather they arise from normal and natural causes. Often they result from practice and training, for example, eating poison, lifting heavy load, walking or dancing on tight-rope etc. Some are based on natural causes that are not known to the general public, for example, a man walks into flaming fire without coming to any harm, (he applies some chemicals like talc to his body) ; or sends a sheet of blank paper and the addressee understands the message it contains. (He writes with an invisible ink which becomes visible if heated by fire or treated with some chemicals.) A third set depends on the sleight of hand like jugglery. All these seemingly abnormal feats actually emanate from the normal causes, although the causes remain hidden from a common man's eyes; they may even be beyond his ability.

Yet there are other strange happenings that cannot be attributed to any normal physical cause. For example, giving information of the unseen, and particularly foretelling the future events; the charms for love and hate, the spells harmfully or beneficially affecting

man’s virility; hypnotism; mesmerism; spiritualism; telekinesis and so on. It is known that such events do take place from time to time; we have seen some demonstrations ourselves; and similar reports were brought to us by reliable sources. Today there are many people in India, Iran and the western countries, who demonstrate such extraordinary feats – and their authenticity is beyond doubt.

It appears from close investigation of their methods and regimen that these feats spring from the will-power of the doer, and from his unshakable confidence in effectiveness of his work. The will-power emanates from the confidence, which in its turn arises from the knowledge. Sometimes the will acts independently and sometimes it needs some help: for example, writing a certain charm with a certain ink in a certain place at a certain time (for the amulets of love or hate) ; or fixing a mirror before a certain child (in the seances of spiritualism) ; or chanting a certain incantation a certain number of times, and so on and so forth. When the conditions are fulfilled the will is strengthened to bring the desired effect into being. When the knowledge becomes one with the knower, it influences his senses to such an extent that he sees the end product, that is, the desired effect, with his eyes. You may verify this statement yourself. Just tell yourself that a certain person is present before you and that you are looking at him; then put your imagination to work to bring his form before your eyes; this should be raised to such a high level of certainty that you become oblivious of all contrary thoughts and ideas. And then you will actually see him standing before you – as you had imagined. Many is a doctor who, acting on this principle, restored to health his incurable patients – simply by creating in them the confidence that they would soon get their health back.

Taking this principle a step further, if someone’s will-power is extraordinarily strong, it might create an impression on other’s psyche too – as it had created on his own self in the foregoing example. That impression might, or might not, depend on fulfillment of some conditions, as indicated earlier.

From the above discourse, we may deduce the following

three principles:

First: The appearance of such extraordinary events depends on the firm "knowledge" and strong conviction of the doer. But it is irrelevant whether that "knowledge" is true to the fact or not. That explains why the conjurations of the priests of the sun-god and the moon-goddess etc. seemed to work – although they believed that the heavenly bodies had souls, which they claimed to bring under their control by their magic. Probably the same applies to the angels and satans whose names are "discovered" and invoked by many practitioners of the magic art. The same is true for spiritualism and its séance and spirit communication – and the spiritualists' belief that the spirits attend their sittings. Utmost that may be claimed regarding those sessions, is that the spirit appears in their imagination or, let us say, before their senses – and this "perception" emanates from their firm belief in their art. But it can never be said that the spirit actually presents itself at those sittings – otherwise all the participants in the sitting should have perceived its presence, because everyone of them has the same senses as the medium has.

By accepting this principle, we may solve many problems related to the séance and spirit communication. For example:

1 – Sometimes the spirit of a living man is called to present itself at a séance, and supposedly it comes there. But at that very moment, that man is busy attending to his affairs, and he never feels his spirit leaving him even for an instant. The question is: As a man has only one spirit, how was it possible that his spirit presented itself to that séance without his being aware of it?

2 – The spirit is an immaterial essence which has no relation whatsoever with space and time. How can it present itself at a certain place at a certain time?

3 - Why is it that often a single spirit appears before different mediums in different forms?

4 – Why is it that sometimes when the spirits are called to a séance, they tell lies and give wrong answers? And why do the various spirits sometimes contradict each other?

All these problems will be solved if the principle is accepted that it is not any spirit that presents itself to the séance; it is only the firm belief and conviction of the spiritualist and his medium that is at work, making the medium see, hear and feel the spirit. It is all a play of his imagination and will; and nothing more.

Second: Some of the people, holding the strong and effective will-power, rely on their own power and their own being, in bringing about the desired effect, the intended super-natural events. Such events are bound to be limited in strength, confined in their scope – in their own imagination as well as in reality.

On the other side, there are some persons, like the prophets and the friends of Allãh who, in spite of their most effective will-power, totally rely on their Lord. They truly worship Him and have full trust in Him. They do not wish any thing but from their Lord, and by His permission. Theirs is a pure and clear will, untainted by any personal feeling of their own. It does not depend except on Allãh. This is a Divine Will – not limited in any way, nor restricted in any manner.

The super-natural events that are brought into being by the first group may be of many kinds: If they are based on enquiry of, or help from, *a jinn* or a spirit etc., then it is called *"al-kihãnah*" (اَلْكِهَانَةُ) = divination, sooth-saying, fortune-telling); and if it comes about by means of a charm, amulet, telesm or other such instruments or portions, then it is called magic.

The super-natural events shown by the prophets and friends of Allãh are also of many kinds: If it is produced as a challenge, in order to prove the truth of the claim of prophethood, then it is called miracle; and if it is not offered as a challenge, then it is named *"al-karãmah* (اَلْكَرَامَةُ) which literally means nobility, mark of honour; and in Islamic terminology is used for a miraculous event shown without a challenge; and if it happens as a result of the prayer to Allãh, then it is called, "answer to the prayer."

Third: As the whole thing depends on the will-power of the doer, its strength varies according to the strength (or weakness) of the will. That is why some of them may nullify the others, as, for

example, the miracle annihilates the sorcery.

Also, a weak agent fails to impose his will on a stronger psyche, as is often seen at the sessions of mesmerism, hypnotism and seances.

We shall further explain this subject somewhere else.

AN ACADEMIC DESCRIPTION OF VARIOUS KINDS OF MAGIC

There are many fields of study dealing with various awe-striking feats and extraordinary deeds; and it is very difficult to classify them so as not to leave any thing out. However, we give here a list of the more commonly used branches of this art:

a) ***as-Sīmiyã':*** It deals with the ways of combining the will-power with particular physical and material forces for manipulating the natural order and, thus, producing extraordinary effects. Under this head comes the manipulation of thought, also known as the eye-enchantment.

It is the most deserving candidate for the title of magic.

b) ***al-Līmiyã':*** It teaches how one may establish a connection between his psyche and the higher and stronger spirits, in order that one may bring them under one's control, for example, the spirits of the stars, or the *jinn,* etc.

It is also called the knowledge of subjugation of the spirits.

c) ***al-Hīmiyã':*** It explains how the powers of the higher spiritual world may be combined with the base elements of this world to produce awe-inspiring effects. It is also called talisman. The stars and their configuration have some relation to the material happenings of this world, in the same way as the elements and compounds and their physical qualities affect those phenomena. Supposedly if the heavenly forms, pertaining to a certain event, for example, A's life or B's death, could be combined with the relevant material forms, the desired effect would take place without fail.

d) ***ar-Rīmiyã':*** It trains one how to control and manipulate the qualities of various things, to produce seemingly super-natural

effects. It is also called *“ash-Sha‘badhah*” (اَلشَّعْبَذَةُ) = sleight of hand, jugglery, magic).

These four fields of knowledge, together with the fifth, called *“al-Kīmiyã’”* (اَلكِيمياءُ) = alchemy, the forerunner of chemistry, primarily the attempt to transmute base metals into gold or silver) formed what the ancients called the five secrets, mysterious branches of knowledge.

ash-Shaykh al-Bahã’ī has said: “The best book written on these subjects was the one I saw in Harãt, *‘Kulãh-e sar’* (the head’s cap) by name. Its name was an acronym, made of the first letters of the five subjects, that is, *al-Kīmiya’, al Līmiya’, al-Hīmiyã’, as-Sīmiyã’* and *ar-Rīmiyã’”.*

The- standard books of these subjects are the epitome of the books of Minds, *Rasã‘il,* al-Khusraw Shãhī, *adh-Dhakhīrah,* al-Iskandariyyah, *as-Sirru ‘l-maktũm* (by ar-Rãzī), *at-Taskhirat* (by as-Sakkaki) and *A‘mãlu ’l-kawakib as-Sab‘ah* (by al-Ḥakīm Ṭamṭam al-Hindī).

Supplementary to the above are the following subjects:

e) The knowledge of numbers (numerology): It shows the relation of numbers and letters with the desired effect. The relevant letters or numbers are filled in a magic square or triangle etc. in a particular sequence.

f) ***al-Khafiyah:*** (اَلخَافِيَةُ) = the hidden knowledge): It breaks down the name of the desired effect or other relevant names, and finds out the names of the angels or the satans managing the said effect; and then composes the invocations made of those names.

The books written by ash-Shaykh Abul-‘Abbãs al-Bũni and as-Sayyid Ḥusayn al-Akhlãṭi are the standard works of the above two subjects.

Then there are various modern arts covering this field, which have gained wide currency nowadays; for example, mesmerism, hypnotism and spirit communication. As described earlier, these are based on the impression created on the imagination by the will-power. There are numerous well-known books and magazines dealing with these subjects.

We have given all this detail here, so that it may be ascertained which of them could be classified as magic or sorcery

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يا أيها الذين آمنوا لا تقولوا راعنا وقولوا انظرنا
واسمعوا وللكافرين عذاب أليم ـ ١٠٤ . ما يود الذين كفروا
من أهل الكتاب ولا المشركين أن ينزل عليكم من خير من
ربكم والله يختص برحمته من يشاء والله ذو الفضل العظيم ـ ١٠٥ .

O you who believe! do not say, "Have regard for us", and say, "Wait for us"; and listen; and for the unbelievers there is a painful chastisement (104). *Those who disbelieve from among the People of the Book do not like, nor do the polytheists, that any good should be sent down to you from your Lord; and Allãh chooses especially whom He pleases for His mercy, and Allãh is the Lord of mighty grace* (105).

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COMMENTARY

QUR'ÃN: *O you who believe!:* It is the first place in the Qur'ãn where the believers have been addressed in this way, "O you who believe!" This mode of address has been used in some eighty-five places in the Qur'ãn.*

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* Eighty-eight, to be exact. Vide *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras,* (by Muhammad Fu'ãd 'Abdul '1-Bãqī). (*tr*.)

Addressing the believers as "O you who believe!", or describing them as "those who believe", is a special distinction accorded to this *ummah.* Otherwise, the previous nations are variously described as "the people" (e.g., *"the People of Nũḥ,* and, *"the People of Hũd"; 'He said: 'O my people! have you considered if I have a clear proof from my Lord . . . ' "* [11: 88]); and *"the dwellers"* (*e.g., "the dwellers of Madyan", "the dwellers of the Rass"); and "the children"* (*e.g., "the Children of Israel", ''O Children of Israel !"*). The epithet, "those who believe", is, therefore, a mark of honour awarded to the believers of this *ummah.*

It appears from deep meditation of the Qur'ãn that the import of the words, "those who believe", is somewhat different from that of the words, "the believers". (For an example of the latter, see the verse: *and turn to Allãh all of you, O believers!* [24:31]) .

Allãh says in the Qur'ãn: *Those who bear the throne and those around it celebrate the praise of their Lord and believe in Him and ask forgiveness for those who believe: "Our Lord! Thou embracest all things in mercy and knowledge, therefore grant forgiveness to those who turn* (to Thee) *and follow Thy way, and save them from the punishment of the hell. Our Lord! and make them enter the gardens of perpetuity which Thou hast promised to them and those who do good of their fathers and their wives and their offsprings, surely Thou are the Mighty, the Wise"* (40:7-8).

It shows that the angels and the bearers of the throne ask forgiveness for "those who believe" ; then the same group has been referred to as "those who turn (to Thee) and follow Thy way". ("turn" actually means, return.) The prayer continues to "make them (i.e., those who believe) enter the garden" and then joins to them the doers of good from among "their fathers and their wives and their offspring." If the epithet, "those who believe", were to include all those who believed in the Apostle of Allãh (s.a.w.a.) irrespective of the quality of their belief, then it would have covered their fathers, wives and children as well (who do good) ; and there would have been no need to mention

them separately; all would have equally benefited from the prayer for those who believe.

Also, have a look at the verse: *And* (as for) *those who believe and their offspring follow them in faith, We will unite with them their offspring and We will not diminish to them aught of their work; every man is responsible for what he has wrought* (52:21): If the offspring who followed them in faith, were included in the epithet, "those who believe", there would be no sense in saying that the offspring would be united with them. Even if we were to say that the verse refers to the generation after generation of the believers, that every succeeding generation will be united to the preceding one (provided both believed in the Apostle of Allãh – s.a.w.a.), the meaning would not seem very proper in the context. If that were the import of the verse, then why this "uniting"? Also, what purpose would be served by the sentence, "and We will not diminish to them aught of their work"? Such an interpretation may prove correct for one generation only, that is, the last one before the Day of Resurrection – that they would be united with the preceding generation. But nobody has suggested this meaning as it goes clearly against the context. What such an interpretation would boil down to is as follows:

All the believers are united, one of them being from another; all of them are of one rank; none has any excellence over the others; nor has an earlier believer any superiority over the later ones; their main qualification is the true belief, and all of them are equal in it. Such a meaning would not fit the wording of the verse which clearly shows that the preceding believers have a sort of superiority over their offspring, who would be raised to the rank of their progenitor as a token of honour to the latter.

The phrase, "and their offspring follow them in faith", proves that the preceding word, "those who believe" refers to a particular group of the believers – the foremost and the first of the Emigrants and the Helpers who followed the Apostle in the hour of straitness. The epithet, those who believe, is a title of honour bestowed on that distinguished group.

Other two verses too point to this fact:

(It is) *for the poor who fled . . . and those who made their abode in the city and in the faith before them . . . and those who came after them say: "Our Lord! forgive us and those of our brethren who had precedence of us in faith, and do not create any spite in our hearts towards those who believe; our Lord! surely Thou art Kind, Merciful"* (59:8-10). This verse uses two phrases, "who had precedence of us in faith", and "those who believe". If the import of both were the same, a pronoun would have looked better in place of the second phrase. By not using a pronoun, Allãh has made it clear that each phrase has its own significance.

Muhammad is the Apostle of Allãh; and those with him are severe against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves, you will see them bowing down, prostrating themselves, seeking grace from Allãh and pleasure; . . . Allãh has promised those among them who believe and do good, forgiveness and a great reward (48:29).

All this shows that the phrase, "those who believe", is a title of honour, reserved for the first and foremost of the believers. Most probably, the opposite phrase, "those who disbelieve", has the contrasting significance, and refers to the polytheists of Mecca and others who were the first and foremost of those who disbelieved in the Apostle of Allãh (s.a.w.a.). For example, *Surely those who disbelieve alike is to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe.* (2:6)

Objection: This interpretation means that when the Qur'ãn says, " O you who believe! ", it addresses a special group that was present in the Prophet's time, to the exclusion of all other believers. But all the Muslims agree that such verses are general in their import and that what is said therein applies to all the believers, whether they were present in the Prophet's days or not; and that this mode of address includes all the believers – in reality, not metaphorically.

Reply: Yes! It is a title of honour, reserved for a selected few. But it does not mean that what is said in those verses is in any way restricted to those few. Whatever order or prohibition

is given in such verses is general and applies to all the believers. The matter of legislation – whether a given order is general or exclusive – is quite different from that of a speech – whether it is addressed to all the believers or to a few of them. Also, it makes no difference whether a verse ordaining a law is addressed to the believers (*O you who believe!*) or to the Prophet in person (*O Prophet!; O Apostle!*), or is revealed without any address at all. The ordained law in all these cases is applicable to all the Muslims, and covers all the believers; although the verse may be addressed to the Prophet or to those who believe as a mark of respect to him or them.

Nevertheless, one should not indiscriminately interpret the phrase, "O you who believe!" and "those who believe", as referring to the first and foremost believers of the Prophet's time; rather one should look at the context, before deciding the true connotation of these phrases in a given verse. For example, look at the verse: *Surely* (as for) *those who believe then disbelieve, again believe and disbelieve, then increase in disbelief, Allãh will not forgive them nor guide them in the* (right) *path* (4:137); and the verse which quotes Nũḥ (a. s.) as saying: *and I am not going to drive away those who believe; surely they shall meet their Lord* (11:129). Obviously, the phrase, those who believe, used in the above verses cannot refer to the above-mentioned group.

QUR'ÃN : *do not say, "Have regard for us", and say, "Wait for us"; and listen:* That is, use the phrase, Wait for us, instead of saying, Have regard for us. And if you failed to comply with this command, it would be tantamount to disbelief, and for the disbelievers there is a painful chastisement. It is a very strong admonition against saying, *"rã'inã"* (رَاعِنَا) = Have regard for us). This phrase has also been mentioned in another verse, which gives an indication of its connotation: *Of those who are Jews* (there are those who) *alter words from their places and say: "We have heard and we disobey"; and: "Hear, may you not be made to hear!" and "rã'inã", distorting* (the word) *with their tongues and taunting about religion* (4:46). Obviously,

the Jews used the phrase, *"Rã'inã"* for something similar to the phrase, "Hear, may you not be made to hear!" And that is why such a mode of addressing the Prophet was prohibited. This explanation agrees with what the tradition says: When the Prophet talked with the Muslims, they used to tell him: *"Rã'inã* (have *regard for us*) O Apostle of Allãh!" – that is, wait for us, so that we may properly understand what you are saying.* But this word carried a connotation of abuse in the Jews' language. The Jews seized upon this opportunity, addressing the Prophet with this phrase, pretending to show respect to him while their intention was nothing short of abuse. And in their usage it meant, "Hear, may you not be made to hear". Thereupon, Allãh revealed: *Of those who are Jews* (there are those who) *alter words from their places and say: "We have heard and we disobey"; and: "Hear, may you not be made to hear!" and: "rã'inã ", distorting* (the word) *with their tongues and taunting about religion; and if they had said* (instead): *"We have heard and we obey", and "hearken", and "onẓurnã"* (wait for us), *it would have been better for them and more upright* (4:46). The believers too were told not to use this phrase and say instead, *"onẓurna ";* the Qur'ãn guided them: "do not say, 'Have regard for us', and say, 'Wait for us' ".

QUR'ÃN: *and for the unbelievers there is a painful chastisement***:** that is, for those who disobey this rule. It is one of the occasions when disobedience of a law of religion has been termed as disbelief.

QUR'ÃN: *Those who disbelieve from among the People of the Book . . .:* Obviously, the phrase, "the People of the Book", refers here exclusively to the Jews, because the preceding verses

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* It is more or less equivalent to the English idiom "I beg your pardon". But with a slight change of accent it may come to mean, stupid or cattle tenderer. (*tr.*)

too dealt with them. If so, then the phrase would serve as a pointer to the cause why they did not like that any good should be sent down to the believers from their Lord. The Jews were given a Book before and they were not happy when the Qur'ãn was sent down to the Muslims, as it deprived them of their distinction as being the People of the Book. They showed avarice about a thing they did not own; they wanted to stand against Allãh when He bestowed His mercy and grace on His servants; "and Allãh chooses especially whom He pleases for His mercy; and Allãh is the Lord of mighty grace".

On the other hand the phrase, as used in this verse, may include all the People of the Book – the Jews and the Christians both. If so, then the verse would serve to widen the scope of the admonition; it would be a generalization after exclusiveness. Both groups shared many characteristics – and especially their enmity to Islam. Some verses coming afterwards strengthen this interpretation. For example: *And they say: "None shall enter the garden except he who is a Jew or a Christian"* (2:111) ; *And the Jews say, "The Christians do not follow anything* (good)", *and the Christians say, "The Jews do not follow any-thing* (good)" . . . (2:113)

TRADITIONS

Abu Nu'aym has narrated in *Ḥilyatu 'l-awliyã'* from Ibn 'Abbãs that he said: "The Apostle of Allãh (s.a.w.a.) said: 'Allãh has not revealed any verse (beginning) with, " O you who believe!" but that 'Ali is its head and leader.' " **(ad-Durru 'l-manthũr)**

The author says: This tradition supports what we shall be quoting in various places that a certain verse was revealed about 'Ali (a.s.) or *Ahlu 'l-bayt;* for example: *You are the best of the nations raised for* (the benefit of) *men* (3:110); . . . *that you may be witnesses over the people* . . . (2:143);. . . *and be with the true ones* (9:119).

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مَا نَنْسَخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنْسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلِهَا أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ
أَنَّ اللهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ـــ١٠٦ . أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ
وَالأَرْضِ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ـــ١٠٧ .

Whatever signs We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or like it. Do you not know that Allãh has power over all things? (106). *Do you not know that Allãh's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and that besides Allãh you have no guardian or helper?* (107).

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COMMENTARY

The verses deal with the subject of abrogation. The word, abrogation, when used as a term of Islamic *fiqh,* means as follows: To show that the time of an order has come to its end; that it is no more valid, is no longer in force. This definition is based on the above verse; and is one of the manifestations of its connotations.

QUR'A-N : *Whatever signs We abrogate . . .: "an-Naskh"*( ) النَّسْخُ is removal, to remove, to annul. The Arabs say: *Nasakhati* 'sh-*shamsu 'ẓ-ẓilla* (نَسَخَتِ الشَّمْسُ الظِّلَّ) = the sun removed the shadow). Allãh says: *And We did not send before you any apostle or prophet, but when he desired, the Satan made a suggestion*

respecting his desire; but Allãh annuls that which the Satan casts, then does Allãh establish His signs; and Allãh is Knowing, Wise (22:52). Also, they say: *Nasakhtu 'l-kitãb* (نَسَخْتُ الكِتابَ) = I copied the book) ; it is as though the writing was removed and its place changed. That is why another verse uses the word *"at-tabdīl"* (التَّبْديلُ) = to change) in place of abrogation: *And when We change* (one) *sign for* (another) *sign, and Allãh knows best what He reveals, they say: "You are a forger". Nay, most of them do not know* (16:101).

Abrogation, however, does not entail obliteration of a verse, turning it into a non-being. Its only effect is the cancellation of the order which the verse had promulgated. It should be noted that the Qur'ãnic verse has been described as a "sign", that is, a mark that points to another thing – a verse is a sign pointing to a Divine Command. The second verse, "Do you not know that Allãh's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth . . .", gives the reason as to why Allãh abrogates some Qur'anic verses. All these factors indicate that abrogation removes a verse as far as its quality as a sign, as a symbol, is concerned. When abrogated, the verse remains in existence as before, but loses its quality as a sign – no longer does it point to an order, as the order is now cancelled. The next phrase, "or cause to be forgotten", clearly supports the foregoing explanation. *"al-Insã' "*(اَلإنْسَاءُ) is to make one forget, to erase out of memory, to eradicate from knowledge. By putting the two phrases side by side, the Qur'ãn makes it clear that abrogation entails erasure of a verse's effect, while *"al-insã'"* causes eradication of the verse itself from the memory.

Symbolism – the quality of being a sign of something – varies with various signs having various aspects and directions. The Qur'ãnic verses are the signs of Allãh because the *jinn* and the men are jointly and severally unable to bring its like; the rules ordained by Allãh are His signs inasmuch as they create piety in man and bring him nearer to his Lord; every created thing is His sign, because it, by its existence, proves the existence of its Creator, and by the qualities of its being, leads to His

attributes and names; the prophets and the friends of Allãh are His signs inasmuch as they, with their words and deeds, call the humanity to Allãh, and so on and so forth. Consequently, a sign may be great or small, strong or weak; that is why Allãh says: *Certainly he saw of the greatest signs of his Lord* (53:18).

Also, a sign may contain only one aspect of symbolism, and another may comprise of various such aspects. The former, when abrogated, is obliterated in its entirety, is completely destroyed. But in the case of the latter, it is possible to abrogate only one aspect of its symbolism, leaving the other ones intact; for example, a Qur'ãnic verse could be abrogated as far as its law was concerned, and yet continue as a Divine Sign because of its eloquence and miraculous qualities.

This generalized meaning of abrogation has been inferred from the reasoning given in the second verse: "Do you not know that Allãh's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth . . ." There are only two objections possible against the factuality of abrogation; or, as the reports say, these were the two arguments advanced by the Jews against it.

First: A sign given by Allãh contains an actual benefit which cannot be obtained from any other thing. If that sign is abrogated, its inherent benefit would be lost; nothing could take its place to preserve that benefit. Allãh is not like His creatures, nor is His knowledge like theirs. His knowledge does not change with the changes in external factors. It is not that one day He knew one thing and issued an order according to that knowledge; then next day the knowledge changed and He became aware of another factor which He did not know before, and therefore He had to cancel the previous order, replacing it with a fresh one. Such inconsistency is not worthy of Divine Sublimity. Of course, it is all right for us mortals, because we cannot comprehend all the aspects of an affair; and as a result of this incomplete knowledge, our decisions are frequently changed and amended. But we should not compare Divine Knowledge without limited and defective perception.

Here it is necessary to point out that such an objection arises from a notion that the power of Allãh is neither comprehensive

and all-encompassing nor unrestricted and unconditional.

Second: Accepted that the Divine Power is all-encompassing and limitless. But once a thing is created it goes beyond the sphere of that power, and cannot be changed. Even in our case, we have power to do or not to do a certain work – so long as we have not done it ; but once we have done it, it becomes an essential being, and goes beyond the limits of our power.

This argument is based on the rejection of the all-encompassing ownership of Allãh; it presupposes that once Allãh has managed a certain affair in a certain way, He cannot change that arrangement in another way. This Jewish belief is portrayed in the verse: *And the Jews say: "The hand of Allãh is tied up"* (5:64).

Allãh replies to the first objection with the question: "Do you not know that Allãh has power over all things?" He certainly has power over all things. Therefore, He may replace a sign with an equally good or even a better sign. The second objection is dealt with by the next question: "Do you not know that Allãh's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and that besides Allãh you have no guardian or helper?" Allãh is the Owner of the heavens and the earth; He can do whatever He likes with His property. No one besides Him owns any thing; otherwise, that owner could interfere in the management of Allãh or put restriction on His authority and control. None else owns any thing – neither in his own rights nor even when Allãh gives to him a partial ownership. When we transfer the ownership of a property to another person, the transferee gets all the rights which we had in that property, and our rights are rendered null and void. But when Allãh gives a property into someone's possession, Allãh's ownership of the property is not disturbed in any way – it does not come to an end, is not even diminished. He continues to be the real Owner and Controller of the property which He has given to others. His is the unrestricted ownership and unconditional management.

If we look at what He has put under our ownership – with-out our having any independent authority over it – then He is our Guardian. And if we look at the apparent independence

enjoyed by us, with His grace – although it is a poverty in the shape of plenty, a dependence disguised as independence – then too we cannot manage our affairs without His help; and He is our Helper.

The above explanation is based on the sequence and style of the two verses. First, there is the exclusivity of the declaration: "Allãh's is the kingdom . . ." Then there is the sequence: "Do you not know that Allãh has power over all things? Do you not know that Allãh's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth . . .?" The two sentences have not been joined with any conjunctive, a sure indication that each is independent of the other, and that the first sentence deals with one objection and the second with another. The last sentence, "and that besides Allãh you have no guardian or helper", gives a finishing touch to the above replies: Even if you are oblivious of Allãh's all-encompassing power and ownership, and are looking at this nominal ownership of yours, you will know that it is not a permanent or independent ownership; you cannot manage it independently; you need a guardian to look after your interests – and Allãh is that guardian. He can and does manage your affairs and your property as He likes.

On the other hand, if your eyes are so fixed on this possession as to make you forget your dependence; if you think that you are the independent and absolute owner of your property, even then you will have to admit that you cannot manage your own affairs, cannot obtain the results you want, without the help and assistance of a super power. And Allãh is your real Helper; it is He who manages your affairs and your property for you. From whatever angle you look at this matter, Allãh's power over all things and His ownership of every thing remain unchallenged and undisputed.

"and that besides Allãh you have no guardian or helper": Apparently it should have been 'besides Him.' Then why did the Qur'ãn use the noun instead of the pronoun? It was to indicate that the foregoing sentences contain the complete replies, and this sentence is not their integral part; rather it is an independent declaration to stengthen those replies.

This discourse leads us to the following conclusions:

First: Abrogation is not a thing confined to only the religious laws; it holds its place in the sphere of creation too.

Second: Abrogation cannot take place without two sides: (i) The abrogated thing or verse, (ii) the abrogative, that is, the thing or verse that abrogates.

Third: The abrogative contains all the benefits and the perfection that was found in the abrogated thing.

Fourth: Although the abrogative differs from the abrogated in its form, both have one thing in common – the perfection and the benefit. When a prophet dies and another is sent in his place – and both of them are the signs of Allãh, one abrogating the other – it takes place in total conformity with the natural system. Life, death, sustenance and other such things often replace each other, the succeeding factors abrogating the preceding ones. It all depends on the varying needs of the society's welfare, on ever-changing level of the man's perfection. Like-wise, when a religious law is replaced by another, the abrogating one has the same power as the abrogated one had, to lead to the spiritual and temporal well-being of the individual and the society; each perfectly suitable for the time it was, or is, in force; each more beneficial in the context of its time. For example, the order to "forgive" in the beginning of the call when the Muslims had neither the manpower nor the armaments, and the command to "fight" when Islam had gained some strength, when the Muslims had gathered enough force and the disbelievers and the polytheists were frightened of them. However, seldom is an abrogated verse devoid of some phrase showing that it was a transitory order which would be abrogated in due course. For example: The verse: *But pardon and forgive* (them) *until Allãh should bring about His command* (2:109), which was abrogated by the verse of fighting; and: . . . *confine them until death takes them away or Allãh makes some way for them* (4:15), which was abrogated by the verse of flogging. The phrases, "until Allãh should bring about His command", and, "or Allãh makes some way for them", give clear indication that the order given therein was temporary and transitory which would soon be abrogated.

Fifth: The relation between the abrogative and the abrogated is quite different from that which is found between a general statement and a particular, between an unconditional clause and a conditional, or between an unspecified proposition and a specified.

What removes the apparent contradiction between the abrogative and the abrogated, is the society's and the individual's good and well-being which is found in both of them. But the apparent contradiction between a general statement and a particular, between an unconditional clause and a conditional, or between an unspecified proposition and a specified, emanates from the strong (or weak) manifestation of the intended meaning. The true intention of the speaker is reflected much more strongly and clearly in a particularized statement, a conditional clause and a specified proposition; and that strength and clarity removes the above-mentioned apparent contradiction – by explaining the general in the light of the particular, the unconditional with the help of the conditional and the unspecified in the frame of the specified. These things are the subject of the Principles of Jurisprudence. The same applies to the decisive and the ambiguous verses, as we shall explain under the verse: . . . *of it there- are some verses decisive, they, are the basis of the Book, and others are ambiguous* . . . (3:7)

QUR'ÃN: *or cause to be forgotten: "Nunsihã"* (نُنْسِهَا) is derived from *"al-insã' "* (to cause to be forgotten; to erase from memory or knowledge), as we have described earlier. It is a general and unconditional statement. It is not restricted to the Apostle of Allãh (s.a.w.a.); nay, it does not include him at all. Allãh had said about him: *We will make you recite so you shall not forget, except what Allãh pleases* (87:6 -7). It is a Meccan verse, while the verse of abrogation is of Medina period. Obviously the Apostle could not forget anything after the promise of Allãh, "so you shall not forget".

Question: This claim is untenable because the promise has the proviso, "except what Allãh pleases". It means that the

Apostle (s.a.w.a.) could forget what Allãh was pleased to make him forget.

Reply: Such exceptional clauses serve only to emphasize the power of Allãh; they do not necessarily mean that the thing mentioned in that clause would actually take place. Look for example at the verse: . . . *they shall be in the garden, abiding in it as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord pleases* . . . (11:108). It just shows that Allãh does have power to change the arrangement made; but all the Muslims agree that the people of the paradise will never be taken out of it. The same is the import of the exceptional clause, "except what Allãh pleases", in this verse.

Moreover, if the said clause were to prove that the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) could actually forget the things taught by Allãh, depending on the pleasure of Allãh, there would be no sense in putting him under obligation by promising him, "you shall not forget". Any human being who remembers any thing, or forgets it, does so by the pleasure of Allãh. The same is true about the animals who remember and forget by His pleasure and decree. And the Prophet too, before this promised grace of Allãh, remembered by the pleasure of Allãh, and forgot by the pleasure of Allãh. What new grace was added here if the promise meant only a quality which the Prophet had already had? If that promise were to make any sense, it would have to mean that the Prophet could never forget anything, although Allãh had full power to make him forget.

Some people have recited the word as *"nansa'ahã"* (نَنْسَأهَا) , derived from *"an-nas' "* (اَلنَّسْأ) = to delay). According to this recitation, the meaning would be as follows: Whatever signs We abrogate by nullifying it, or put it off by delaying its appearance, We bring one better than it or like it, and the Divine management in advancing something or putting it off, does not diminish its perfection or benefit.

The fact that the Divine Management always brings out a thing's perfection and benefit, is inferred from the clause, "We bring one better than it or like it". The goodness emanates from the perfection of a thing or benefit of a laid down rule.

The abrogated thing or rule was surely good; and the abrogating thing or rule too is at least as good, if not better. So, every Divine Management is the ideal of goodness, perfection and benefit.

TRADITIONS

Innumerable traditions have been narrated by both sects, from the Prophet (s.a.w.a.), his companions, and the Imãms of his *Ahlu 'l-bayt,* that there are abrogated and abrogating verses in the Qur'ãn.

The Commander of the faithful ('Ali - a.s.) said, after enumerating various abrogated and abrogating verses: "And the word of Allãh: *And I did not create the jinn and the human beings except that they should worship Me* (51:56) was abrogated by His word: *and they shall continue to differ, except those on whom your Lord has mercy; and for this did He create them* (11:118 - 119), that is, for the mercy did He create them." (*at-Tafsīr,* an-Nu'mãni)

The author says: In this tradition the Imãm has used the word, abrogation, in a wider sense than its terminological meaning. The latter verse mentions a reality which restricts the reality described by the former. The first verse affirms the Divine Worship as the purpose of creation. While doing a work, Allãh keeps a purpose in view; and He cannot be defeated in His purpose. On the other hand, he has decreed that they should choose their own path, and consequently some of them progress on the right path, while others go astray. Those who by their own choice choose the path of guidance are covered by the mercy of Allãh, and it is for this mercy that He has created them. In this way, the second verse affirms another purpose for the creation: The mercy which accompanies the worship and guidance. This goal is reached by only a selected few, while the first verse had affirmed a goal for all the *jinn* and the men, and that is the Divine Worship. Some people are created for some others, and those others for yet others; this chain continues till it reaches the group which sincerely worships Allãh. Looking

from this point of view, it is easy to understand why all the *jinn* and men have been said to be created for the worship. We plant a garden and nurse the trees for their fruits. The real purpose is the fruits, but the trees and their branches and leaves are planted, protected and looked after because they are the means to get the fruits. And it will be quite right to say that the garden's purpose was its fruits.

In the same way, the second verse "abrogates" the generality of the first verse, focusing its sight on the true worshippers who are the recipients of the mercy of Allãh.

The same book narrates from the same Imãm that he said: "And the word of Allãh: *And there is not one of you but shall come down to it; this is a decided decree of your Lord* (19:71)*,* was abrogated by His word: *Surely* (as for) *those whom the good has already gone forth from Us, they shall be kept far off from it; they will not hear its faintest sound, and they shall abide in that which their souls long for. The great fearful event shall not grieve them* (21:101-103)."

The author says: It must be noted that the relation between these two verses is not that found between a general declaration and a particular one. The first verse says that it is a decided and unavoidable decree of Allãh; and such a decree cannot be rendered null and void, it cannot be cancelled. What the "abrogation" mentioned in this tradition means will be explained, God willing, in the exegesis of the verse 21:101, mentioned above.

al-Bãqir (a.s.) said: "Among the (various types of) abrogation is "*al-badã'* "* (اَلبَدَآءُ) contained in the word of Allãh:

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* *al Badã'* (اَلبَدَآءُ) is a terminology of Shi'ite theology. It means that Allãh makes known His plan to His chosen servants only to that extent which is beneficial to the mankind or which is necessary to make a test meaningful. When the time comes when the angel, Prophet or Imãm concerned thinks that the plan of work is coming to its end, a new development extends the plan or brings it to an unexpected end. The saving of the People of Yũnus and the intended sacrifice of Ismã'īl are among its examples. (tr.)

Allãh effaces what He pleases and establishes (likewise), *and with Him is the basis of the Book* (13:39); and (demonstrated in) the saving of the People of Yũnus." (al 'Ayyãshī)

The author says: Its reason is clear.

Some traditions of the Imãms of the *Ahlu 'l-bayt* (a.s.) count the death of an Imãm and his being succeeded by another Imãm as an example of the abrogation.

The author says: We have already explained this matter. The number of the traditions containing this theme reaches to nearly *mutawãtir.*

'Abd ibn Ḥamīd, Abu Dãwũd (in his *an-Nãsikh wa 'l-mansũkh*) and Ibn Jarīr have narrated from Qatãdah that he said: "(During the lifetime of the Prophet) a verse used to abrogate (another) verse; and the Prophet of Allãh used to recite a verse, and a chapter, and as much as Allãh wished of a chapter, then it was raised (i.e. erased) and Allãh caused His Prophet to forget it. So, Allãh said narrating it to His Prophet: *Whatever signs We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than it;* He says: There is (some) ease in it, some allowance in it, some order in it, (and) some prohibition in it." (*ad-Durru '1-manthũr*)

The author says: The same book quotes numerous traditions on the theme of "causing to be forgotten"; but all of them have to be discarded because they go against the teaching of the Book of Allãh, as we have explained in the meaning of this word.

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أَمْ تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَسْئَلُوا رَسُولَكُمْ كَمَا سُئِلَ مُوسَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ
وَمَنْ يَتَبَدَّلِ الْكُفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ ــ ١٠٨ .
وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّونَكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كُفَّاراً
حَسَداً مِنْ عِنْدِ أَنْفُسِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ فَاعْفُوا وَاصْفَحُوا
حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ إِنَّ اللهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ــ ١٠٩ . وَأَقِيمُوا
الصَّلَوٰةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَوٰةَ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ
اللهِ إِنَّ اللهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ــ ١١٠ . وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا
مَنْ كَانَ هُوداً أَوْ نَصَارَىٰ تِلْكَ أَمَانِيُّهُمْ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
صَادِقِينَ ــ ١١١ . بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِنْدَ
رَبِّهِ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ــ ١١٢ . وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ لَيْسَتِ
النَّصَارَىٰ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَىٰ لَيْسَتِ الْيَهُودُ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ وَهُمْ يَتْلُونَ
الْكِتَابَ كَذَٰلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ فَاللهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ــ ١١٣ . وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ مَنَعَ
مَسَاجِدَ اللهِ أَنْ يُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ وَسَعَىٰ فِي خَرَابِهَا أُولَٰئِكَ مَا كَانَ
لَهُمْ أَنْ يَدْخُلُوهَا إِلَّا خَائِفِينَ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ
عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ــ ١١٤ . وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ
اللهِ إِنَّ اللهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ــ ١١٥ .

Or, do you wish to put questions to your Apostle, as Musã was questioned before? And whoever adopts unbelief instead of faith, he indeed has lost the right way (108). *Many of the People of the Book wish that they could turn you back into unbelievers after your faith, out of envy on their part,* (even) *after the truth has become manifest to them. But pardon and forgive* (them) *until Allãh should bring about His command. Surely Allãh has power over all things* (109). *And keep up prayer and pay the zakãt, and whatever good you send before for yourselves you shall find it with Allãh; surely Allãh sees what you do* (110). *And they say: "None shall enter the garden except he who is a Jew or a Christian ". These are their vain desires. Say: "Bring your proof if you are truthful"* (111). *Yes! whoever submits his self entirely to Allãh and he is the doer of good, he has his reward with his Lord, and there is no fear for them nor shall they grieve* (112). *And the Jews say: "The Christians do not follow anything* (good) ", *and the Christians say: "The Jews do not follow anything* (good) ", *while they recite the Book. Even thus say those who have no knowledge, like to what they say; so Allãh shall judge between them on the Day of Resurrection in what they differ* (113). *And who is more unjust than he who prevents* (men from) *the mosques of Allãh, that His name shall not be remembered in them, and strives to ruin them?* (*As* for) *those, it was not for them that they should have entered them except in fear; they shall meet with disgrace in this world, and they shall have great chastisement in the hereafter* (114). *And Allãh's is the East and the West; therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allãh's face; surely Allãh is Ample-giving, Knowing* (115).

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COMMENTARY

QUR'ÃN: *Or, do you wish to put questions to your Apostle . . . :* It appears from this sentence that some of the Muslims – although

believing in the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) – had put some questions to him not unlike the questions put to Mũsã (a.s.) by the Jews. That is why they have been placed here in line with the Jews for admonition.

The tradition too supports this interpretation.

QUR'ÃN : *the right way:* that is, the straight path.

QUR'ÃN : *Many of the People of the Book wish . . .:* Reportedly it refers to Ḥuyayy ibn al-Akhṭab and other Jews who were with him.

QUR'ÃN: *But pardon and forgive* (them): According to the exegetes this order was abrogated by the verse of fighting.

QUR'ÃN: *until Allãh should bring about His command:* As indicated above, this clause alludes to a command that was to be revealed in not too distant a time about the Jews. The case is similar to the verse: (As for) *those, it was not for them that they should have entered them except in fear* (2:115), when read together with the verse: *the idolaters are nothing but unclean, so they shall not approach the Sacred Mosque after this* (very) *year . . .* (9 :29). The clause, "except in fear", had hinted to the intended ban that was promulgated later.

We shall explain the meaning of *"al-amr"* (اَلأَمْرُ) = command) under the verse: *And they ask you about the soul. Say: "The soul is from the command of My Lord"* (17:85).

QUR'ÃN: *And they say: "None shall enter the garden except he who is a Jew or a Christian":* The verse explicitly joins the Christians with the Jews; from now on the sins and crimes of both will be enumerated together.

QUR'ÃN: *Yes! whoever submits his self entirely to Allãh and he is the doer of good, he has his reward with his Lord:* It reiterates for the third time the basic principle that the spiritual felicity does not depend on name or nomenclature, that no one

can get honour with Allãh except by true faith in, and total surrender to, Him. The first declaration was in the verse: *Surely those who believe and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabaens, whoever believes in Allãh and the Last Day and does good, they shall have their reward* . . . (2:62); the second one was in the verse: *Yea! whoever earns evil. . . And* (as for) *those who believe and do good deeds, these are the dwellers of the garden* . . . (2:81-82); the third is this verse under discussion.

A comparison of this verse with the previous two shows that the true belief entails submitting one's self entirely to Allãh; and *"al- iḥsãn"* (اَلإِحْسَانُ) = to do good) is synonymous to the good deeds.

QUR'ÃN: *while they recite the Book:* that is, while they follow the Book revealed to them. They should not say such things because they have the Book with them and it clearly shows them where the truth is.

This explanation is supported by the next sentence, "Even thus say those who have no knowledge, like to what they say". The word, "those who have no knowledge", refers to the unbelievers (other than the People of the Book) and the polytheists of Arabia. They used to say, "The Muslims do not follow anything good", or "The People of the Book do not follow anything good".

QUR'ÃN: *And who is more unjust than he who prevents. .* Apparently it refers to the unbelievers and polytheists of Mecca. These two verses were revealed not long after the Apostle of Allãh (s.a.w.a.) emigrated to Medina.

QUR'ÃN: *it was not for them that they should have entered them except in fear:* The verb, "was", shows that the sentence describes a past event. It perfectly fits the pagans of Mecca and their misdeeds. The traditions say that "he who prevents" refers to the unbelievers of Mecca, it was they who prevented the Muslims from praying in the Sacred Mosque (*Masjidu 'l-Ḥarãm*)

and in other mosques within the precinct of the Ka‘bah.

QUR'ÃN: *And Allãh's is the East and the West:* The east and the west – any direction, whatsoever – really belong to Allãh. His is the true mastership that cannot be altered or transferred; it is not like the possession known to us in our society's framework. Allãh's ownership permeates the possessed thing itself as well as its benefits and effects, unlike our ownership that covers only the benefits and effects, and not the thing itself.

A property, possession, *per se,* cannot stand except with its owner. Therefore, the east and the west, nay, all the directions whatsoever, exist because of Allãh – the Owner. Allãh preserves and manages the directions, and encompasses them. Anyone turning to any of the directions, turns in reality to Allãh.

The east and the west are relative terms. They cover al-most all the directions, except the two imaginary points of the true north and the true south. That is why Allãh left the clause, "whither you turn", unconditional, and did not say, 'whither you turn of these two directions'. To whatever direction one turns one's face, it is bound to be either east or west. The sentence, "And Allãh's is the East and the West", therefore, implies that all the directions belong to Allãh.

The east and the west were selected for special mention because man fixes the directions with the help of rising and setting of the sun and other heavenly bodies.

QUR'ÃN: *therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allãh's face:* It puts the cause in place of the effect. What the sentence implies is as follows: To whichever direction you turn, it is allowed to you, because Allãh's face is in that directions too.

The concluding clause, "surely Allãh is Ample-giving, Knowing", supports this interpretation.

"al-Wãsi‘" (اَلواَسعُ) = translated here as "ample-giving") literally means extensive, abounding, far-reaching. It implies that Allãh's ownership is extensive and all-pervading and every direction belongs to Him. He is All-knowing too; therefore, He knows what your aim and intention is, no matter whichever

direction you turn your face to. He is not like human beings or other creatures – if we want to see some physical object, we have to turn to a particular direction in order to bring it into focus. But Allãh is not confined to a particular direction; turn to any direction, you are turning to Allãh, and Allãh knows it.

The verse gives a latitude about the *qiblah,* as far as its directions is concerned, but not apropos its location as may be inferred from the clause, "And Allãh's is the East and the West", inasmuch as it mentions the directions only.

TRADITIONS

Muhammad ibn al-Ḥusayn said: "It was written to al-'Abdu 'ṣ-Ṣãliḥ: 'A man prays in a cloudy day in an open space and he does not know the (direction of) *qiblah,* he prays; and when he has finished his prayer, the sun appears and (he finds that) he had prayed against *qiblah.* Should he regard his prayer (as valid) or should he repeat it?' He wrote: 'He should repeat it if the time (of prayer) is not over. Does he not know that Allãh says – and His word is true: *therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allãh's face?'"* (*at-Tahdhīb*)

al-Bãqir (a.s.) said about the word of Allãh: *And Allãh's is the East and the West . . .:* "Allãh has revealed this verse especially for the voluntary prayer; *therefore, whither you turn, thither is Allãh's face; surely Allãh is Ample-giving, Knowing.* And the Apostle of Allãh prayed on his camel by making gestures (for the actions of the prayer) wherever it turned to, when he proceeded to Khaybar, and also when he returned from Mecca – and the Ka'bah was behind his back." (al-'Ayyãshī)

The author says: al-'Ayyãshī has narrated another tradition of nearly the same meaning through Zurarah from aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.); and so have done al-Qummi and ash-Shaykh from Abu 'l-Ḥasan (a.s.) and aṣ-Ṣadũq from aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.).

If you study the traditions of the Imãms of the *Ahlu 'l-bayt,* related to the exegesis of the Qur'ãnic verses – the general and

the particular; the unconditional and the conditional – you will see that often they infer one rule from the general verse, and another rule from the same when read together with the particular one. For example, the general verse implies a voluntary rule; but read with the particular one it promulgates an obligatory law. The same applies to the cases of disliked and forbidden things. And so on.

The above is a key factor in understanding the traditions narrated from the Imãms; and on it depends the knowledge of a multitude of their traditions.

You may infer from it two important principles of the Qur'ãnic knowledge:

First: Every Qur'ãnic clause or sentence, taken alone, describes an established reality or rule; when it is joined to another revealed qualifying clause, it indicates another reality or rule; add to it another qualification or condition and you get a third set of confirmed reality or law; and so on. For example, look at the verse: *Say: "Allãh; then leave them sporting in their vain discourses"* (6:91). It indicates four separate meanings depending on the word we stop at: First, "Say: Allãh"; second, "Say: Allãh; then leave them"; third, "Say: Allãh; then leave them in their vain discourses"; fourth, "Say: Allãh, then leave them sporting in their vain discourses". Many such examples may be found in the Qur'ãn.

Second: If two stories or two themes are joined in one sentence or clause, both of them must be having a common base.

These two esoteric principles of exegesis open the way to many Qur'ãnic secrets – and Allãh is the true Guide.

* * * * *

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللهُ وَلَداً سُبْحَانَهُ بَلْ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ كُلٌّ لَهُ قَانِتُونَ ـ ١١٦ . بَدِيعُ السَّمٰوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
وَإِذَا قَضَى أَمْراً فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ـ ١١٧ .

And they say: "Allãh has taken to himself a son". Glory be to Him; rather, whatever is in the heavens and the earth is His; all are obedient to Him (116). *The Originator of the heavens and the earth; and when He decrees an affair, He only says to it, "Be", and it is* (117).

* * * * *

COMMENTARY

QUR'ÃN : *And they say: 'Allãh has taken to himself a son ":* Obviously the pronoun "they" refers to the Jews and the Christians; the former said that 'Uzayr was the son of God; the latter claimed the same thing for Jesus Christ. The verse takes the admonition of the People of the Book a step further.

The People of the Book initially used the phrase, son of God, for their prophets etc. as a mark of respect for them – in the same way as they used the words, sons of God and His chosen people, for themselves. Gradually, the metaphorical sense gave way to the real one, and 'Uzayr and Jesus Christ were believed to be the sons of God in the real sense of the word.

Allãh refuted their claim in these two verses. They contain

two proofs against them.

The first proof is given in the words: "whatever is in the heavens and the earth is His; all are obedient to Him." How does one beget a son? A physical being removes some of his parts from himself and develops and nurtures it into another member of the species, similar to himself. Now, nothing can be similar to Allãh; He is far above such things; whatever is in the heavens and in the earth belongs to Him, is His property; every thing is made existent by Him, is managed by Him; it is by nature obedient to Him, subservient to Him. Things being as they are how can any thing be similar to Allãh? Does God belong to a species? How can He beget someone of the same "species"?

The second proof is given in the second verse: "The Originator of the heavens and the earth; and when He decrees an affair, He only says to it, **'Be',** and it is." *"al-Badī' "* (اَلْبَدِيْعُ) = translated here as the Originator) is used for the one who invents and originates a thing without any previous model, without any existing blue-print. Only Allãh is the Originator in the true sense of the word. He originates every thing; no creature of His resembles any fellow creature. His creation is not like others' production inasmuch as He does not make any thing by imitation; He does not create gradually, nor with the help of the secondary causes; when He decides an affair, He only says to it, "Be", and it is – without any need of any previous model or gradual development. How can such an Originator be said to take to himself a son? After all, begetting a son entails gradual development.

These are the two incontestable proofs which expose the fallacy of the belief that God has begotten a son. The verses also prove the following two facts:

First: The command to obey Allãh and to worship Him is all-pervading; it is binding to all that is in the heavens and in the earth.

Second: The actions of Allãh are not gradual. It follows that every thing that comes into being gradually, must have another non-gradual existence which emanates from the Divine Command. Allãh says: *His command, when He intends anything, is only that He says to it, 'Be", and it is* (36:82).

And Our command is but one, as the twinkling of an eye (54:50). A detailed discussion of this Qur'ãnic reality will be given, God willing, under the verse 36:82, quoted just above.

QUR'ÃN: *Glory be to Him: "subḥãn"* (سُبْحَانَ) *is* an infinitive verb, synonymous to *"at-tasbīḥ"* (اَلتَّسْبِيْحُ) = glorification of God). It is always used as a first member of genitive construction – the second member always being the name, 'Allãh' (or a pronoun referring to Him). Grammatically it is in accusative case pointing to a deleted verb. Originally it was, *sabbaḥtuhu tasbīḥan* (سَبَّحْتُهُ تَسْبِيْحاً = I glorified Him as He should be glorified) ;
but the verb was deleted and the infinitive verb was joined to the pronoun 'Him' in genitive construction, to stand in place of the verb.

By using this phrase here, Allãh has taught the believers the manner of declaring His glory whenever something unworthy of His sacred name is ascribed to Him.

QUR'ÃN: *all are obedient to Him: "al-Qunũt"* (اَلْقُنُوْتُ = to worship; self-abasement).

QUR'ÃN : *The Originator of the heavens . . .*: Originating implies that the thing so created is not like any other thing.

QUR'ÃN : *and it is:* The sentence branches out from the word, "Be". The preceding clause is not a conditional one; that is why this verb is not in apocopate form, that is, its last vowel has not been cut off.

TRADITIONS

Sudayr aṣ-Ṣayrafi said: "I heard Ḥumrãn ibn A'yan asking Abu Ja'far (a.s.) about the word of Allãh: *The Originator of the heavens and the earth.* Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said: 'Verily Allãh, Mighty and Great is He!, originated all things by His (Own) Knowledge, without there being any previous model. So, He originated the heavens and the earth, and there were no heavens

or earth before them. Do you not listen to His word, *and His throne was on the water?' "* (*al-Kãfī; Baṣã'iru 'd-darajãt*)

The author says: The tradition points to yet another fine point. It shows that "the water", mentioned in this verse, is something different from the water known to us. The Imãm has quoted this verse to prove that Allãh's creation is based on originality. And the Divine authority and power, before the creation of these heavens and this earth, was firm on the water. Obviously, the water mentioned here was not the water of this earth, or like this earthly water.

We shall explain it further under the verse: *and His throne was on the water* (12:7).

AN ACADEMIC AND PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE ON THE ORIGINALITY OF THE CREATION

The experience as well as the philosophical argument proves that any two things are different from each other in their respective particulars even if they are united in their common and general characteristics. Even if the two are so alike as to make it difficult for the senses to discern any dissimilarity between them, when seen or tested with the help of scientific instruments clear differences come before the eyes. It means that every creation is unique and original; no two things are made of one model.

Now we should look at this matter from the philosophical point of view. Let us take any two things sand see why they are distinct from each other. If the basis of distinction is not a thing within their own selves, then it must be an outside factor. In that case, their selves must be absolute and indivisible entities. But an absolute and indivisible entity cannot be duplicated nor repeated. In other words, the two distinct entities would become one and the same. And it is a contradiction in terms. Therefore, we have to admit that every being is different in its own self from all other beings. It follows that every thing is unique; and

does not have any similarity or likeness to any other thing. And it is Allãh who has given every thing its uniqueness, distinction and originality, as He is the Originator of the heavens and of the earth.

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وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ لَوْلَا يُكَلِّمُنَا اللهُ أَوْ تَأْتِينَا آيَةٌ
كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ تَشَابَهَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ قَدْ
بَيَّنَّا الآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ ـ ١١٨ . إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيراً
وَنَذِيراً وَلَا تُسْئَلُ عَنْ أَصْحَابِ الْجَحِيمِ ـ ١١٩ .

And those who have no knowledge say: “Why does not Allãh speak to us or a sign come to us?” Even thus said those before them, the like of what they say; their hearts are all alike. Indeed We have made the signs clear for a people who are sure (118). *Surely, We have sent you with the truth as a bearer of good news and as a warner, and you shall not be questioned as to the companions of the flaming fire* (119).

* * * * *

COMMENTARY

QUR’ÃN: *And those who have no knowledge say:* It refers to the polytheists and the unbelievers other than the People of the Book. It is set in contrast with the verse 113: *And the Jews say, “The Christians do not follow anything* (good)”, *and the Christians say, “The Jews do not follow anything* (good)’, *while they recite the Book. Even thus say those who have no knowledge, like to what they say.* In this verse, the People of the Book were joined to the polytheists and unbelievers of Arabia; and the verse

under discussion joins those polytheists and unbelievers to the People of the Book: "And those who have no knowledge say: ' Why does not Allãh speak to us or a sign come to us?' Even thus said those before them (i.e., the People of the Book, including the Jews) the like of what they say", because the Jews had disputed with their prophet, Mũsã (a.s.) and demanded from him the like of what these pagans say.

The People of the Book and the pagans of Arabia are alike in their way of thinking; the former say the like of what the latter say, and vice versa: *their hearts are all alike.*

QUR'ÃN: *Indeed We have made the signs clear for a people who are sure:* It is the rebuttal of the demand of those who have no knowledge. The signs they are demanding have already come to them, already been made clear to them. But they cannot benefit from them because only those who are sure of those signs may get their benefit. As for these people who have no knowledge, their hearts are submerged into ignorance, sick with the disease of prejudice and envy. That is why they have lost the ability to benefit from the signs sent by Allãh.

The above explanation makes it clear why they have been described as "those who have no knowledge".

After exposing the falsity of their demand, Allãh directs His speech to the Apostle, declaring in clear terms that he has surely been sent by Allãh "with the truth as a bearer of good news and as a warner". The verse was meant to bring comfort to the Prophet's heart and to make him realize that these adversaries were the people of the Fire, and they would not come to the path of guidance.

QUR'ÃN: *and you shall not be questioned as the companions of the flaming fire:* Its import is similar to that of the verse: *Surely those who disbelieve alike is to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe* (2:6).

* * * * *

وَلَنْ تَرْضىٰ عَنْكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلَا النَّصَارىٰ حَتّىٰ تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ
قُلْ إِنَّ هُدَى اللهِ هُوَ الْهُدىٰ وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بَعْدَ الَّذِي
جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ — ١٢٠ .
الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ أُولٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ
وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهِ فَأُولٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ — ١٢١ . يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ
اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ —١٢٢.
وَاتَّقُوا يَوْماً لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئاً وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا
عَدْلٌ وَلَا تَنْفَعُهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُونَ — ١٢٣ .

And the Jews will not be pleased with you, nor the Christians until you follow their religion. Say; “Surely Allãh’s guidance, that is the (*true*) *guidance”. And if you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, you shall have no guardian from Allãh, nor any helper* (120). *Those to whom We have given the Book read it as it aught to be read. These* (*it is who*) *believe in it; and whoever disbelieves in it, these it is that are the losers* (121). *O Children of Israel, call to mind My bounty which I bestowed on you and that I made you excel the nations* (122). *And be on your guard against a day when no soul shall avail another in the least neither shall any compensation be accepted from it, nor shall intercession profit it nor shall they be helped* (123).

COMMENTARY

QUR'ÃN: *And the Jews will not be pleased with you, nor the Christians . . .:* The Speaker turns again to the two groups, after a cursory glance at the others. These two verses give the sum and substance of the foregoing talk. After all those admonitions and reprimands of the Jews and the Christians, Allãh turns to His Apostle and says: They will never be pleased with you until you follow their religion which they have invented according to their desires, composed of their own opinions. Then He orders him to confute their views and tell them: "Surely Allãh's guidance, that is the (true) guidance". Why should a man follow the other for guidance? And the only guidance is the guidance of Allãh; that is the truth which must be followed. There is no guidance in any thing else; and certainly not in your religion. And what is that religion? Just an amalgam of your desires glorified as religion.

"Allãh's guidance" stands for the Qur'ãn – revealed by Allãh and, therefore, attributed to Him. The sentence, "Surely Allãh's guidance is the (true) guidance", restricts the guidance to that of Allãh. Conversely, it means' that their religion is devoid of guidance; in other words, it is just a set of their desires.

It follows that what the Prophet has got is knowledge, and what they hold in their hands is ignorance. Therefore, Allãh says to the Prophet: "And if you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, you shall have no guardian from Allãh, nor any helper."

One cannot help admiring this verse: How logical, solid and well-grounded is the argument it offers; how many fine points of eloquence it holds, in spite of its brevity; how lovely is the language and how clear is the style!!

QUR'ÃN : *Those to whom We have given the Book . . .:* The restriction of the clause, "These (it is who) believe in it", gives rise to the belief that this verse is a reply to an unspoken question. The preceding words, "And the Jews will not be pleased with you, nor the Christians . . .", gave an indication that there was

no hope of their believing in the Prophet. If so, then how any of them could be expected to believe? Was it not in vain to invite them to Islam? This verse clears the air, and says: Those to whom We have given the Book (i.e., the Torah or the Injīl) and who read it as it aught to be read, these it is who truly believe in their Book and as such they shall believe in you.* Or that, they believe in a revealed book; and therefore shall believe in any other book revealed by Allãh. Or that, these it is who shall believe in the Qur'ãn.

(According to some of the above interpretations, the pro-noun, 'it', in the phrase, "believe in it", would stand for more than one noun by turns.)

The phrase, "Those to whom We have given the Book", refers to a group of the Jews and the Christians, who did not follow their desires, who wanted to follow the truth. "the Book" refers to the Torah and the Inji1.

Another possible explanation: "the Book" might be referring to the Qur'ãn, and, "Those to whom We have given the Book", to the believers. In that case the meaning would be as follows: Those to whom We have given the Qur'ãn and who read it as it should be read, these it is who believe in the Qur'ãn, and not the Jews and the Christians who follow their desires.

The restriction, in this case, would give a converted proposition.

QUR'ÃN: *O Children of Israel!. . . nor shall they be helped:* These two verses are almost similar to the verses 47 and 48. Here the present talk with the Children of Israel comes to its end. The Qur'ãn, by repeating the prologue in the epilogue neatly ties the two ends together.

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* Because their books foretell of the Apostle's coming. (*tr.*)

TRADITIONS

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said, explaining the word of Allãh, *Those to whom We have given the Book read it as it aught to be read:* "They recite its verses slowly, and understand it, and act according to its orders, and hope for its promise, and are afraid of its threat, and take lesson from its stories, and obey its commandments, and desist from what it prohibits. By God, it does not mean memorizing its verses, and studying its letters, and reciting its chapters, and learning its one-tenths and one-fifths. They remembered its words and neglected its boundaries. And what it means is meditating on its verses and acting according to its orders. Allãh, the High, has said: (It is) *a Book We have sent down to you abounding in good, so that they may ponder over its verses"* (38 :29). (*Irshãdu 'l-qulũb,* ad-Daylami)

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said about the word of Allãh, *read it as it aught to be read,* that : "(It is) stopping at (the description of) the Garden and the Fire." (al-'Ayyãshī)

The author says: What the Imãm means is the meditation on the Qur'ãn.

The same Imãm said about the verse, *Those to whom We have given the Book . . .,* that: "They are the Imãms." (*al-Kãfī*)

The author says: This explanation is based on the principle of the "flow of the Qur'ãn", and gives the best example of those to whom Allãh has given the Book.

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وَإِذِ ابْتَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ
لِلنَّاسِ إِمَاماً قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي قَالَ لاَ يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ - ١٢٤ .

And (remember) *when his Lord tried Ibrãhīm with certain words, then he fulfilled them: He said: "Surely I am going to make you an Imãm for men."* (Ibrãhīm) *said: "And of my offspring?" He said: "My covenant will not include the unjust"* (124).

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COMMENTARY

Beginning with this verse, the Qur'ãn throws light on some aspects of the life of Ibrãhīm (a.s.); these verses prepare the minds for the ones promulgating the change of *al-qiblah* (اَلقِبْلَةُ = direction of prayer) as well as the rules of the *ḥajj.* These stories also explain the reality of the pure Islamic religion – with its different grades and levels – looking at its fundamental beliefs, moral teachings and some rules of the *sharī'ah;* among other things they show how Allãh bestowed on him *al-Imãmah* (اَلإِمَامَةُ = leadership) of the people, how he built the Ka'bah, and how he prayed to Allãh to send an Apostle among them.

QUR'ÃN: *And* (remember) *when his Lord tried Ibrãhīm with certain words, then he fulfilled them:* It refers to the occasion

when Ibrãhīm (a.s.) was given the *Imãmah.* It had happened during the end period of his life; it was the time when he had become very old, after Ismã'īl and Isḥãq both had been born, and he had brought Ismã'īl and his mother to reside in Mecca, as some other exegetes also have taken note of this fact. This timing is clearly pointed at by his words, "And of my offspring? ", when Allãh told him: " I am going to make you an Imãm for men." Obviously he did not know, nor did he even expect, that he would get any offspring, until the angels brought to him the good tidings of Ismã'īl and Isḥãq. Even when the angels told him that he was to get children, he responded to those tidings in such words as could apparently be construed to have sprung from despair and pessimism. Allãh says: *And inform them of the guests of Ibrãhīm: When they entered upon him, they said: "Peace" He said: "Surely we are afraid of you."; They said: "Be not afraid, surely we give you the good news of a boy, possessing knowledge. "He said:" Do you give me good news* (of a son) *when old age has come upon me? – of what then do you give me good news!" They said: "We give you good news with truth; therefore, be not of the despairing"* (15:51-55). The same was the reaction of his wife when she was given that good news, as Allãh says: *And his wife was standing* (*by*)*, so she laughed; then We gave her the good news of Isḥãq, and after Isḥãq, of* (a son's son) *Ya'qũb. She said: " O woe to me! Shall I bear a son when I am an* (extremely) *old* (woman) *and this my husband an* (extremely) *old* (man)? *Most surely this is an amazing thing." They said: "Do you wonder at the decree of Allãh? The mercy of Allãh and His blessings be on you, O people of the house, surely He is Praised, Glorious"* (11:71-73).

As you see, the talks of both Ibrãhīm and his wife show that by that time they had lost all hope of getting any child. That is why the angels replied to them in those words to give them hope and make them happy. Clearly neither he nor his wife knew before that time that they would be given any off-spring. But on this occasion, we see that as soon as Allãh told him, " I am going to make you an Imãm for men", he pleaded, "And of my offspring?" This prayer brings before our eyes the image of a man who is sure

of having an offspring. How can a man, and particularly one like Ibrãhīm, the friend of Allãh (who very well knew the nuances of the language), speak before his Lord about a thing he knew nothing about? If he had uttered these words before getting any children, it would have been necessary for him to add some proviso, like "if Thou givest me any offspring". This event, therefore, must have taken place in the end period of Ibrãhīm's life some time after he had been given the good news.

Moreover, the words, "And (remember) when his Lord tried Ibrãhīm with certain words, then he fulfilled them. He said: 'Surely I am going to make you an Imãm for men' ", show that his *Imãmah* was bestowed to him after Allãh had tried him with certain trials. These consisted of various sufferings and tests which Ibrãhīm (a.s.) underwent in his life. And according to the Qur'ãn, the clearest and hardest of all was the trial of the sacrifice of Ismã'īl. Allãh says: *And when he reached* (the age of) *working with him, he said: " O my son! surely I am seeing in dream that I am sacrificing you; consider then what you see." He said: " O my father! do what you are commanded; if Allãh please, you will surely find me of the patient ones." So when they both submitted and he threw him down upon his forehead, and We called out to him* (saying) : *" O Ibrãhīm! You have indeed proved the vision true; surely thus We reward the doers of good. Most surely this is a manifest trial"* (37:102-106). This manifest trial had taken place in the extreme old age of Ibrãhīm, because even the birth of Ismã'īl had taken place when Ibrãhīm had become very old, as Allãh quotes him as saying: *"Praise be to Allãh, Who gave me in old age Ismã'īl and Isḥãq; most surely my Lord is the Hearer of prayer"* (14:39). And the *imãmah* was given to him after these trials.

Now we come back to the verse under discussion:

"And (remember) when his Lord tried Ibrãhīm" : *"al-Ibtilã'"* (اَلإبْتِلاَءُ) and *"al-balã'"* (البَلآءُ) both have the same meaning: to try, to put to test. You give someone an order, or put him in a difficult situation, in order to find out his inner strength, his spiritual sublimity; thus you bring out his hidden qualities like

obedience, bravery, generosity, chastity, knowledge, faithfulness (or their opposite traits) ; it is only then that you may say, “I have tested him”, “I have put him to trial”. One cannot be tested except through action; it is the action which brings out the hidden qualities of a man, and not the word; words may lie but not the actions. Allãh says: *Surely We have tried them as We tried the owners of the garden. . .* (68:17); . . . *Surely Allãh will try you with a stream . . .* (2:249).

Now Allãh says that He tried Ibrãhīm with certain words. This sentence looks at the “words” inasmuch as they are related to actions – they are the vehicles to carry the commands of the speaker to the listener. For example, Allãh says: . . . *and speak to men good* (words). . . (2:83), that is, behave with them properly.

“With certain words, then he fulfilled them”: *“al-Kalimãt”* (اَلكَلِماتُ) is plural of *al-kalimah* (اَلكَلِمَةُ = word). Of course, the word, “word”, has sometimes been used in the Qur’ãn for a substance, a corporeal being (instead of a talk or speech) as Allãh says: . . . *a Word from Him whose name is the Messiah, ‘Isã son of Maryam. . .* (3:45). But this usage is based on the fact that ‘Isã, like Ãdam, was created by a word from Allãh as the Qur’ãn says: *Surely the likeness of ‘Īsã is with Allãh as the likeness of Ãdam; He created him from dust, then said to him: “Be”, and he was* (3:59).

Otherwise, whenever the Qur’ãn attributes the “word” to Allãh, it means speech and saying. For example:

and there is none to change the words of Allãh (6:34).

there is no changing the words of Allãh (10:64).

and Allãh desired to manifest the truth of what was true by His words (8:7).

Surely those against whom the word of your Lord has proved true will not believe (10:96).

But the word of punishment proved true against the unbelievers (39:71).

And thus did the word of your Lord prove true against those who disbelieved that they are the inmates of the Fire (40:6).

and had not a word gone forth from your Lord till an appointed time, certainly affair would have been decided between them (42:14).

and the word of Allãh, that is the highest (9:41).

He said: "The truth then (it) *is and the truth do I speak"* (38:84).

Our word for a thing when We intend it, is only that We say to it: "Be", and it is (16:40).

These and similar verses use "word" in the meaning of "talk" because the talk conveys to the hearer the proposition which the speaker intends to communicate, or the command which he wants him to obey. It is for this reason that sometimes the Qur'ãn describes the "word" as being complete ! It is as though a "word" emanating from the speaker remains incomplete until it is implemented, and then it becomes complete, is proved true. Allãh says: *And the word of your Lord has been accomplished* (completed) *truly and justly; there is none to change His words* (6:115) ; *and the good word of your Lord was fulfilled* (completed) *in the Children of Israel* (7:137).

The above explanation does not go against the fact that Allãh's word is Allãh's action. His word and His action are not two different things, they are one and the same. Realities and facts have their own rules, and literary demands and semantic values are governed by other rules. Whatever realities Allãh wishes to disclose to one of His prophets or other servants, and whatever command He wants to impose on someone, it is His talk and speech, inasmuch as it fulfils the same purpose which a talk or speech does – it conveys information, and proposition as well as His order and prohibition. Not frequently, the word, "word", is used for ideas, intentions and actions if they have the same import as "word" has. We say: "I will surely do this because I have already said so, and have given my word." In fact, you have never before uttered a single word about it; all that your "given word" actually means is that you do have a firm intention to do it, without any wavering will, without listening to any intercessor. The Arab poet, 'Antarah, said:

"And (it was) my word (to my soul) whenever it was in

turmoil or excitement: Be at ease; you will either earn the accolade or will go to (final) rest.” Obviously, he had not talked with his soul or spirit; what he means by “word” is that he had made up his mind to fight bravely, and to face the enemy without retreating from his stand; because if he was victorious, his people would sing his praise, and if he was killed, he would get the rest and tranquility.

In this light it is easy to see that the phrase, “when his Lord tried Ibrãhīm with certain words”, refers to the difficult situations he had to face, and the Divine covenants he had entered into, for example, his conflict with his people regarding the stars and the idols, his test by fire and emigration, his supreme trial of sacrificing his son, and other such things. Allãh has not specified which tests those “certain words” refer to, because this information had nothing to do with the theme of the verse. But one thing is certain: As it was only after the fulfillment of those words that Allãh said to him, “Surely I am going to make you an Imãm for men”, the words must have been such as to prove his capability for the status of the *Imãmah.*

This much about the “words”. Now comes the next phrase: “then he fulfilled them”. If the pronoun “he” refers to Ibrãhīm (a.s.), then it would mean that he fulfilled the task which was expected of him, he obediently did what he was told to do. If on the other hand the pronoun refers to the Lord (as it obviously does) then it would mean that his Lord helped him to do what was expected of him.

Somebody has said that the phrase, “certain words”, refers to the Divine Speech, “Surely I am going to make you an Imãm for men. . . My covenant will not include the unjust.” But it is an explanation which does not carry any weight, because nowhere in the Qur’ãn the word “words” has been used for “sentences”.

QUR’ÃN: *“Surely I am going to make you an Imãm for men”:* That is, I am going to make you a leader for men; they will adhere to you and follow in your footsteps, in words and deeds. *al-Imãm* (اَلإِمَامُ = leader) is the one whom the people follow. That is why many exegetes have said that *al-Imãmah* (اَلإِمَامَةُ = leadership)

in this verse means prophethood, because a prophet is followed and obeyed by his *ummah* in their religion; Allãh has said: *And We did not send any apostle but that he should be obeyed by Allãh's permission* (4:64). But this interpretation has no leg to stand upon. Because:-

First: The word *Imãman* (إِمَاماً = Imãm, leader) is the second accusative of the causative *jã'iluka* (جَاعِلُكَ = literally, maker of you; translated here as "going to make you"), which is a nomen agentis; and a nomen agentis is never used in place of a past tense; if used in place of a verb it always gives the meaning of present or future tense. When Allãh used these words in His talk with Ibrãhīm (a.s.), He in effect gave him a promise to make him an Imãm in future – in other words, to give him a status which he did not have at that time. And Ibrãhīm (a.s.) was already a prophet: Remember that this talk itself was a revelation sent to him in his capacity as a prophet. He was a prophet long before he was given the status of the *Imãmah.* There-fore, the *Imãmah* in this verse cannot mean prophethood. (This reply is given by another exegete.)

Second: We have described earlier that Ibrãhīm (a.s.) was given the *Imãmah* in his later days after setting the good news that he would be given offspring, Isḥãq and Ismã'īl; and the angels had given him that news while they were on their way to destroy the *ummah* of Lilt; and Ibrãhīm at that time was a prophet and an apostle. He was a prophet and apostle before he got the *Imãmah;* therefore, his *Imãmah* was different from his prophethood and apostleship.

Why are such interpretations offered by exegetes from time to time? The reason lies in the banality – because of repeated use during all these centuries – which has degraded the sublime meanings of the Qur'ãnic words in people's minds.

The word, *Imãmah,* has been debased in similar way. Some people say that it means prophethood, precedence, being in authority; others interpret it as *al-khilãfah* (اَلْخِلاَفَة = successorship), *al-wiṣãyah* (اَلوصَايَة = regency) or headship in spiritual and temporal affairs. But all this is wrong. "Prophethood" means receiving news from Allãh; "messengership" means conveying that message

to people; "authority" implies that others have to follow one's example and obey one's orders. Now this authority is a concomitant of prophethood and messengership; *khilãfah* and *wiṣãyah* both mean successorship to a prophet; likewise, headship in spiritual and temporal affairs is a sort of the above-mentioned authority; and all of it is different from the correct meaning of the *Imãmah.* The *imãmah* implies that a man has an intrinsic quality because of which people should follow him faithfully, making their words and deeds to conform with his words and deeds; but none of the above-mentioned interpretations brings out this meaning. Ibrã-hīm (a.s.) was already a prophet whose obedience was obligatory for all men. What would be the sense in telling him that Allãh was going to make him a prophet for men? Or, to make his obedience compulsory in all that he said and did? Or, a head of his *ummah* to order or forbid in matters of religion? Or, a successor? Or, *a khalīfah* in the earth to decide between the people by the order of Allãh?

The difference between the *Imãmah* and all the above-mentioned words is not only verbal; it is the realities behind those words that differ from one another. When a man is given prophethood, it becomes obligatory for the people to obey him. Therefore, it would be wrong to say to that prophet, "I am going to make your obedience compulsory for men although I have already made it compulsory". Nor will it be correct to convey the same idea in other words, because the same problem will arise again. When Allãh gives someone some status, he does not get merely a new title or name; bounties of Allãh are not empty words; there are real things behind those words. Therefore, the *imãmah* has its own reality, different from other words' realities.

We find in the Qur'ãn that whenever it mentions *Imãmah* it puts guidance side by side – it looks as though Allãh was using the latter to explain the former. Allãh says in the story of Ibrãhīm: *And We gave him Isḥãq and Ya'qub as a further gift; and We made* (them) *all righteous ones; and We made them Imãms, to guide* (people) *by Our command. . .* (21:72 - 73); and He says in another place: *And We made of them Imãms to guide by Our command as they were patient, and they were certain of Our signs* (32:24). Here the *imãmah is* explained, or rather defined, in terms

of guidance, and then further qualified with the proviso, "by Our command". Clearly, the *Imãmah* does not mean any type of guidance; it is a guidance which emanates from the command of Allãh. And the reality of that command is described in these words: *His command, when He intends anything, is only that He says to it: "Be", and it is. Therefore glory be to Him in Whose hand is the kingdom of every thing. . .* (36:82-83); *And Our command is but one, as the twinkling of an eye* (54:50). We shall explain, when writing about these verses, that the Divine Command (which the former verse also calls "the Kingdom") is the sublime side of the creation, with which they face towards Allãh; it is pure, free from fetters of time and space, and untouched by change and variation. It is also the real meaning of the word "Be", because the Divine Command "Be", is nothing other than the actual existence of the thing concerned. This "command" is in contrast to *al-khalq* (اَلخَلْقُ = creation) which is the other side of the things – it is subject to changes and variations; it grows by and by and deteriorates in the same way; it works within the framework of time and space. (We shall fully explain this theme in its proper place, Allãh willing.)

To sum it up, *Imãm is* a leader who guides by a Divine Command which is closely associated with him. The *Imãmah,* in its esoteric sense, is *al-wilãyah* = (اَلوِلاَيَةُ guardianship, authority) over the people in their actions and activities; and its guidance entails conveying them to the final destination by the command of Allãh. It is different from that guidance which only shows the way – and which is usually done by the prophets and messengers of Allãh as well as by other believers who guide the people towards Allãh with sincere exhortation and good advice. This second type of guidance is mentioned in the following verses:

And We did not send any apostle but with the language of his people, so that he might explain to them clearly; then Allãh makes whom He pleases err and He guides whom He pleases. . . (14:4).

And he who believed (*i.e.,* the believer from the family of Pharaoh) *said: "O my people! follow me, I will guide you to the right course"* (40:38).

Why should not then a company from every party from among them go forth that they may acquire (proper) *understanding in religion, and that they may warn their people when they come back to them, so that they may be cautious?* (9:122)

(We shall further explain it later on.)

Then Allãh describes the reason why He gave them the *Imãmah,* in these words, *as they were patient, and they were certain of Our signs.* (See 32:24, quoted above.) The criteria, therefore, are patience and absolute certainty. They were steadfast and patient in the cause of Allãh. Patience, in this verse, is unconditional; therefore it means remaining patient and steadfast in all matters and all conditions with which Allãh may choose to test the submission and servitude of a servant. And they possessed highest degree of certainty. Going through the stories of Ibrãhīm (a.s.), we find the following words of Allãh in the Qur'ãn: *And thus did We show Ibrãhīm the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and so that he might be of those who are sure* (6:75). The verse clearly indicates that showing of the kingdom to Ibrãhīm was the prelude to the bestowal of absolute certainty on him. It proves that certainty is an inseparable concomitant of looking at the kingdom. This is also the theme of the following verses:

Nay! if you had known with a knowledge of certainty, you should most certainly have seen the hell (102:5 – 6). *Nay! rather, what they used to do has become* (like) *rust upon their hearts. Nay! most surely they shall on that day be shut out away from their Lord. . . . Nay! most surely the record of the righteous shall be in the 'Illiyyīn. And what will make you know what 'illiyyīn is? It is a written book; see it those who are near* (to Allãh) (83:14 – 15; 18–21).

These verses prove that the "near ones" are those who are not shut out away from their Lord; on their hearts there are no rust or coverings of sin, ignorance and doubt; they are the ones who have absolute certainty about Allãh, and they see the *'illiyyīn* as they see the hell.

In short, it is essential for an Imãm to be a man of absolute certainty, who sees the world of the "kingdom" of Allãh which is based on the "words" of Allãh. And we have explained earlier that the kingdom is the command of Allãh, which, in its turn, is the esoteric side of the universe.

Now let us have a fresh look at the verse 21:73 (and 32:24) quoted earlier. "And We made them Imãms, to guide (people) by Our command:" it very clearly proves that whatever is the subject of guidance (i.e., the hearts and the deeds), the Imãm has its inner reality; he is constantly in touch with its another side – the side of the command, which is never hidden from him. It is known that the hearts and the deeds, like any other thing, have two sides, one of the "command" and the other of the "creation"; therefore, the reality of the deeds of the men – both good and bad – is always within the vision of the Imãm, always under his observation; and he has authority over both ways – the one of happiness and bliss and the other of unhappiness and distress. Also, Allãh has said: (Remember) *the day when We will call every people with their Imãm* (17:71). (We shall explain when writing about this verse that the "Imãm" here means the true leader, and not the scroll of deeds, as some people think.) There-fore, the Imãm is the one who shall lead the people to Allãh *on the day when hidden things shall be tried,* as he leads them to Him in the manifest and esoteric lives of this world. The last quoted verse also shows that there cannot be a single period, a single moment, without an Imãm, because Allãh says, "every people". (The detailed proof of this statement will be given under that verse.)

The *Imãmah is* such an exalted and sublime position that it cannot be given except to one who is extremely virtuous by his own self. If someone's soul is polluted, even in a minute degree, by any injustice or sin, then he needs someone else to guide him back to the right way. And Allãh has said: *Is he then who guides to the truth more worthy to be followed, or he who himself does not go right unless he is guided?* (10:35). Here Allãh puts two groups opposite to each other: one is that which guides to the truth; and the other, that which does not go right unless guided

by someone else, in other words, the one which needs a helping hand to be guided aright. This contrast means that the one who guides to the truth, is rightly guided by himself; conversely, the one rightly guided by another person cannot guide to the truth.

It follows from the above discourse that:-

First: The Imãm must be *al-ma'ṣũm* (اَلمَعْصُوْمْ = sinless; protected from error and sin). Otherwise, he would not be rightly guided by himself, as explained above. Also, the following verse proves their *al-'iṣmah* (اَلعِصْمَةَ = sinlessness): *And We made them Imãms to guide* (people) *by Our command, and We revealed to them the doing of good* (deeds) *and the establishing of prayer and the giving of* zakãt, *and Us* (alone) *did they worship* (21:73). According to this verse, all the deeds of the Imãm are good, he is guided to them, not by any other person, but on his own by Divine help. The phrase translated above as "the doing of good (deeds)" is *fi'la 'l-khayrãt* (فِعْلَ الخَيْراتِ = to do good deeds) ; it is *al-maṣdar* (اَلمَصْدَر = roughly translated as infinitive verb), used as the first construct of a genitive construction; and such *a maṣdar* proves that the action has surely taken place. Let us explain it in another way: If Allãh would have said, 'We revealed to them: Do good deeds', it would not have shown that they actually obeyed the command and did good; but when He says, *We revealed to them the doing of good,* it means that whatever they did was good and it was by Divine inspiration and heavenly help.

Second: Conversely, whoever is not *ma'ṣũm,* can never be an Imãm, a guide to the truth.

Now, it is clear that the adjective, "the unjust", (in the Divine declaration, "My covenant will not include the unjust") covers everyone who might have done any injustice, for example, polytheism, idol-worship or any other sin, in any period of his life, even if he may have repented and been good afterwards.

One of our teachers (may Allãh have mercy on him!) was asked as to how this verse could prove that the Imãm must be *ma'ṣũm.* He replied:

Logically, we may divide mankind into four groups: (1) One who remains unjust throughout his life; (2) One who was never unjust in any period of his life; (3) One who was unjust

in the beginning, but became just later on; and (4) One who was just in the beginning, but became unjust afterwards, Ibrãhīm was too sublime in position to ask for the *Imãmah* for the first or the fourth group. This leaves two groups (the second and the third) which could be included in his prayer. And Allãh rejected one of them – the one who was unjust in the beginning but became just later on. Now, there remains only one group who could be given the *Imãmah* – the one who was never unjust in any period of his life; that is, who was *ma'ṣũm.**

To sum it up, the verse shows that:

First: *Imãmah is* a Divinely-made status.

Second: The Imãm must be *ma'ṣũm,* by Divine *'iṣmah;* in other words, he must be protected by Allãh from sins and errors.

Third: The earth cannot remain without a rightful Imãm, as long as there is a man on it.

Fourth: It is essential for an Imãm to be supported by the Divine help.

Fifth: The deeds of the people are not hidden from the Imãm.

Sixth: The Imãm must have knowledge of all that is needed by the people for their good in this world and the next.

Seventh: It is impossible for any other person to surpass the Imãm in any virtue.

These seven are among the basic factors of the *Imãmah,* and this verse, read with other relevant verses, leads us to them, and Allãh is our Guide.

Objection: As the *Imãmah* means to guide by the command of Allãh, and as that guiding to the truth is concomitant with the Imãm's being rightly guided by Allãh (as has been inferred from the verse: *Is he then who guides to truth more worthy to be followed* . . .), then all the prophets should certainly be called Imãms. Obviously, prophethood of a prophet comes into being only when

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* It is a simplified version of the argument given by al-Qãḍī Nũrullãh Tustari (ash-Shahīd ath-Thãlith) in his *Ihgaqu 'l-hagq.* (Vide the new ed. with footnotes by Ayatullah Sayyid Shahabuddin Mar'ashi Najafi, Matba'ah Islamiyyah, Tehran, vol. II, pp. 367 – 369.) (tr.)

he is rightly guided by Allãh through revelation; a prophet is not guided by any other person through teaching or advice etc. Therefore, bestowal of prophethood would be synonymous with that of the *Imãmah.* And the objection you had put against the interpretation of the *Imãmah* with prophethood would be turned *in toto* against your explanation.

Reply: What we have inferred from the foregoing description is that if one guides to Allãh by His command, he must be guided aright not by any other person but by Allãh Himself. But the Qur'ãnic verses have not shown that its contrary proposition is also true, that is, it has not been proved that whoever is rightly guided by Allãh should also be a guide to Allãh. Therefore, it is not necessary that every prophet should be called an Imãm. In one place, Allãh declares about various prophets that they were rightly guided by Him, and yet does not join it with the statement that they guided their people to the truth. He says: *And We gave to him* (*i.e.,* Ibrãhīm) *Isḥãq and Ya'qũb; each did We guide, and Nũḥ did We guide before, and of his descendants, Dãwũd and Sulaymãn and Ayyũb and Yusuf and Harun; and thus do We reward those who do good; and Zakariyya and Yahya and 'Isã and Ryas; every one was of the righteous* (ones) *and Ismã'īl and Ilyasa ' and Yũnus and Lut; and every one We did exalt over the worlds; and from among their fathers and their descendants and their brethren; and We chose them and guided them to the straight path. This is Allãh's guidance, He guides thereby whom He pleases of His servants; and if they had set up others* (with Him), *certainly what they did would have become ineffectual for them. These are they to whom We gave the book and the wisdom and the prophethood; therefore if these disbelieve in it, We have* (already) *entrusted with it a people who are not disbelievers in it. These are they whom Allãh guided, therefore follow their guidance. Say: "I do not ask you for any reward for it; it is but a reminder to the worlds"* (6:86 - 90). *

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* This reply does not seem to meet the objection. The verse clearly says that these prophets were guided by Allãh. Also, it is accepted that all the prophets, including (cont. next page)

The context of the above verses shows that this Divine Guidance is an unalterable firm decree; it will continue in this *ummah* even after the Messenger of Allãh (s.a.w.a.), and will remain confined within the progeny of Ibrãhīm (a.s.), as the verses 43:26 – 28 prove: *And when Ibrãhīm said to his father and his people: "Surely, I am clear of what you worship;* (*I* worship) *but* (only) *Him Who created me, for surely He will guide me." And He made it a word to continue in his posterity, so that they may return* (to God). When Ibrãhīm (a.s.) declared to his people that he was clear of what they worshipped and that he worshipped only Him Who had created him, he had already achieved that guidance which contemplation and logical reasoning can produce. Then he told them of his expectation that Allãh would surely guide him. This subsequent guidance was obviously different from the earlier one; it was a guidance by the command of Allãh. Thereafter, Allãh says that He made this Divine Guidance "a word to continue" in Ibrãhīm's posterity. This is one of those verses in which "word" has been used not for speech but for a substance – it refers to the guidance as "a word". The same is the interpretation of "word of piety" in the verse: *and made them keep the word of piety, and well were they entitled to it and worthy of it* (48:26).

The above explanation makes it clear that the *Imãmah* after Ibrãhīm (a.s.), is confined to his descendants. The sentences, "(Ibrãhīm) said: 'And of my offspring?' He said: 'My covenant will not include unjust'", point to this fact. Obviously, Ibrãhīm (a.s.) had asked for the *imãmah* not for all but only for some of his descendants, and he was told that it would not be given to the unjust of his descendants. Needless to say that not all of his descendants were unjust; therefore, this reply disqualifies only one group and not all. In other words, it grants the request for a selected group of his offspring and further sanctifies it as a covenant, and on

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those mentioned in this verse, guided their people aright, and that they did so by the command of Allãh. Thus, all the characteristics of the *Imãmah* were found in every prophet who called his people to the right path. (tr.)

that basis it says that the covenant of Allãh will not include the unjust ones.

QUR'ÃN: *"My covenant will not include the unjust":* This expression shows how far removed are the unjust from the circle of the Divine Covenant;* therefore, it is an example of *isti'ãrah bi 'l-kinãyah.*

TRADITIONS

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said: "Verily Allãh (to Whom belong Might and Majesty) accepted Ibrãhīm as a servant before making him a prophet; and verily Allãh made him a prophet before appointing him as a messenger; and verily Allãh appointed him as a messenger before taking him as a friend; and verily Allãh took him as a friend before making him an Imãm. When He combined for him all (the above-mentioned) things, *He said, 'Surely I am going to make you an Imãm for men.'"* The Imãm further said: "It was because of the greatness of it (i.e., *Imãmah*) in the eyes of Ibrãhīm (a.s.) that he said: *'And of my offspring?' He said: 'My covenant will not include the unjust.'"* The Imãm explained: "A fool will not be Imãm of a pious." (*al-Kãfī*)

The author says: The same meaning has been narrated from the same Imãm through another chain of narrators, and from al-Bãqir (a.s.) through yet other chain; and al-Mufid has narrated it from as- Sadiq (a.s.).

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* Its literal translation: My covenant will not reach the unjust. Note that Allãh did not say: The unjust will not reach My covenant, because it would have implied that it was within the power of man – albeit a just one – to reach the status of the *Imãmah.* The present sentences does not leave room for any such misunderstanding; it clearly shows that getting the *imãmah is* not within human jurisdiction, it is exclusively in the hand of Allãh and He gives to whom He pleases. (tr.)

The Imãm has said that Allãh accepted Ibrãhīm as a servant before making him a prophet. This theme is inferred from the Qur'ãnic verse: *And certainly We gave to Ibrãhīm his rectitude before, and We knew him fully well. When he said to his father and his people: "What are these images to which you* (as devotees) *cleave?" They said: "We found our fathers worshipping them." He said: "Certainly you have been* (both) *you and your fathers, in manifest error." They said: "Have you brought to us the truth, or are you one of the triflers?" He said: "Nay! your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, Who brought them into existence, and I am of those who bear witness to this"* (21:51 – 56). This story shows how Allãh took Ibrãhīm (a.s.) as a servant in the beginning of his spiritual journey.

It is one thing that someone is a slave or servant of Allãh, and a quite different thing that he is taken or accepted by Allãh as His slave. Being a slave of Allãh is a concomitant of existence and creation; anyone who is created and has perceiving faculties is inescapably a slave of Allãh; this servitude does not depend on Divine acceptance. Man, for example, owes his existence to his Lord, is created and made by Him; he may behave in his personal life according to this servitude's dictates by surrendering himself to his Lord the Almighty, or he may act rebelliously, but his submission or rebellion does not alter the fact that he is a born slave of Allãh. Allãh says in the Qur'ãn: *There is no one in the heavens and the earth but will come to the Beneficent Allãh as a servant* (19:93).

But if he does not act as a slave should do, if he behaves in the earth with arrogance and rebellion, then he does not deserve to be called a slave or servant of Allãh, because he does not fulfill the conditions of servitude. A servant surrenders himself to his Lord, and leaves all his affairs in his Master's hands. Therefore, only he deserves to be called a servant of Allãh who is His slave in his person as well as in his action – only such a man can truly be called a slave of Allãh. Allãh says: *And the servants of the Beneficent God are they who walk on the earth in humbleness. . .* (25:63). Accordingly, when Allãh accepts a man as His servant, He takes masterly interest in that servant's affairs; in other words,

Allãh becomes his *waliyy* and guardian, and takes all his affairs in His Own hands. Such a servitude is the key to *al-wilãyah* (اَلوِلاَيَةُ = guardianship). The verse 7:196 points to this reality: *"Surely my guardian is Allãh, Who revealed the Book, and He takes in hand* (the affairs of) *the good."* The adjective "good", refers to those who are worthy of Divine guardianship and friendship. Allãh has referred to the Prophet in several places in the Qur'ãn as His servant, for example, . . . *Who revealed the Book to His servant. . .* (18:1); . . . *Who sends down clear signs upon His servant. . .* (57 : 9) ; . . . *when the servant of Allãh stood up calling upon Him . . .* (72:19). In short, to say that Allãh accepted someone as His servant, is another way of saying that Allãh took him under His *wilãyah* and guardianship.

The Imãm said: ". . . and verily Allãh made him a prophet before appointing him as a messenger". The difference between a prophet and a messenger, as shown by the traditions narrated from the Imãms of the *Ahlu 'l-bayt, is* as follows:

A prophet sees in his dream what Allãh intends to reveal to him; and a messenger sees the angel and talks to him.

The same gradual progress is seen in the history of Ibrãhīm (a.s.). Allãh says: *And mention Ibrãhīm in the Book; surely he was a truthful* (man), *a prophet, when he said to his father: "O my father! why do you worship what neither hears nor sees, nor does it avail you in the least"* (19:41 – 42). The verse shows that he was a prophet when he said this to his father. It was a confirmation of what he had told his people as soon as he arrived among them: "*Surely I am clear of what you worship;* (I worship) *but* (only) *Him Who created me, for surely He will guide me"* (43:26 – 27). Then we read the verse 11:69 which says: *And certainly Our messengers* (*i.e.,* angels) *came to Ibrãhīm with good news. They said: "Peace." "Peace," said he.* This event, in which Ibrãhīm saw the angels and talked to them, had taken place in his old age long after he had left his father and his nation.

The Imãm said: "And verily Allãh appointed him as a messenger before taking him as a friend." It is inferred from the words of Allãh: *And who is better in religion than he who . . . follows the faith of Ibrãhīm, the upright one? And Allãh took Ibrãhīm*

as a friend (4:125). Apparently it shows that Allãh took him as a friend because of the same upright faith and religion which he had promulgated by the command of his Lord; the theme of this verse is to describe the distinction and excellence of that upright religion which so much raised the status of Ibrãhīm that he was taken as a friend of Allãh.

al-Khalīl (اَلْخَلِيْلُ) is more exclusive than *aṣ-Ṣadīq* (اَلصَّدِيْقُ), although both are generally translated as "friend". When a friend is sincere and truthful (*aṣ-Ṣãdiq*) in his dealings with the other friend, he is called *aṣ-Ṣãdiq;* thereafter, if he turns away from all else, confining his needs and requirements to that friend only, he is called *al-khalīl,* because *al-khullah* (اَلْخُلَّةُ) means need and requirement.

The meaning of the Imãm's sentence, "and verily Allãh took him as a friend before making him an Imãm," may be understood from the foregoing commentary.

The words of the Imãm: "A fool will not be Imãm of a pious," point to the verse 2:130 – 131: *And who forsakes the religion of Ibrãhīm but he who makes himself a fool, and most certainly We chose him in this world, and in the hereafter he is most surely among the righteous. When his Lord said to him, Submit* (yourself), *he said: "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds."* In this verse Allãh says that whoever turns away from the religion of Ibrãhīm – in other words, whoever is unjust – is a fool; then he contrasts this foolishness with Divine selection – a selection which has been explained in the next sentences as "Islam" or submission to God. (Ponder on the clause, *When his Lord said to him, Submit yourself*). Then we see that *al-Islãm*) (اَلإِسْلاَمُ = submission) and *at-taqwã* (اَلتَّقْوى) = piety, fear of Allãh) have been made one, or applicable to one meaning, in the verse: *O you who believe! fear Allãh as is due to Him, and do not die but as Muslims* (3:102). (Think deeply on it.)

al-Mufīd has narrated from Durust and Hishãm from the Imãms (of the *Ahlu 'l-bayt*)*:* "Ibrãhīm was a prophet, and he was not an Imãm until Allãh, Blessed and High is He, said (to him): *"Surely I am going to make you an Imãm for men."* (Ibrãhīm)

said: *"And of my offspirng?"* Then Allãh, Blessed and High is He, said: "My *covenant will not include the unjust."* Whoever had (ever) worshipped an idol or a sculpture or an image, cannot be an Imãm."

The author says: Its meaning is clear from the above explanations.

It is narrated in *al-Amãli of* aṭ-Ṭũsī (with complete chain of narrators) and in *al-Manãqib* of Ibn al-Maghãzili (as *a marfũ'* tradition) from Ibn Mas'ũd from the Prophet that he said (explaining the words of Allãh to Ibrãhīm in this verse) : "Whoever prostrated before an idol, leaving me, I will not make him an Imãm." Then the Prophet said: "And that prayer was fulfilled in me and my brother Ali; neither of us ever prostrated before any idol."

Wakī' and Ibn Marduwayh have narrated from 'Ali ibn Abi Ṭãlib (a.s.) that the Prophet said (in explanation of the words of Allãh, *My covenant will not include the unjust*): "There is no obedience except in good." (*ad-Durru 'l-manthũr*)

'Abd ibn Ḥamīd narrated from 'Imrãn ibn Ḥusayn that he said: "I heard the Prophet saying: 'There is no obedience of a creature in disobedience of Allãh (i.e., a man should not be obeyed if he tells you to disobey Allãh).'" (*ibid.*)

The author says: The meanings *of* those traditions are easily understood from the earlier explanations.

al-'Ayyãshī has narrated in his *Tafsīr,* through several chains, from Safwan the camel-driver, that he said: "We were at Mecca; and the talk gradually reached the words of Allãh, *And* (remember) *when his Lord tried Ibrãhīm with certain words, then he fulfilled them."* (The Imãm) said: "That is, he completed them with Muhammad and 'Ali and the Imãms from the descendants *of* 'Ali, as Allãh says: *Offspring, one from the other*" (3:34).

The authour says: This tradition takes the "word" in the meaning *of* the *Imãmah;* a similar explanation is given to "word"

in the verses: . . . *for surely He will guide me. And He made it a word to continue in his posterity* . . . (43 : 27 – 28). According to this tradition, the verse would mean as follows: And remember when his Lord tried Ibrãhīm with certain words, that is, his own *imãmah,* and that of Isḥãq and his progeny; then He completed it with the *imãmah* of Muhammad and of the Imãms from his family members, who were from the progeny of Ismã‘īl; then Allãh made it known to Ibrãhīm telling him: "*Surely lam going to make you an Imãm for men."* Ibrãhīm said: "*And of my offspirng?"* Allãh said: "My *covenant will not include the unjust."*

* * * * *

وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَأَمْناً وَاتَّخِذُوا مِنْ مَقَامِ
إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلّىً وَعَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمٰعِيلَ أَنْ طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ
لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْعَاكِفِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ ـــ ١٢٥ . وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ
رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَٰذَا بَلَداً آمِناً وَارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ مَنْ آمَنَ
مِنْهُمْ بِاللهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ قَالَ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَأُمَتِّعُهُ قَلِيلاً ثُمَّ
أَضْطَرُّهُ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ـــ ١٢٦ . وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ
إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمٰعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ
السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ـــ ١٢٧ . رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا
أُمَّةً مُسْلِمَةً لَكَ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ
الرَّحِيمُ ـــ ١٢٨ . رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولاً مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ
آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ
الْحَكِيمُ ـــ ١٢٩ .

And (remember) *when We made the House a rendezvous for men and a* (place of) *security, and take* (for yourselves) *a place of prayer on the standing-place of Ibrãhīm. And We enjoined Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl* (saying): *"Purify* (*you* two) My *House for those who make circuit and those who abide* (in it for devotion) *and those who bow down* (and) *those who prostrate themselves"* (125). *And* (remember) *when Ibrãhīm said. "My Lord! make it a secure town and provide its people with fruits, such of them as believe in Allãh and the last day" He said: "And whoever disbelieves, I will grant him enjoyment for a short while, then I will drive him to the chastisement of the Fire; and it is an evil destination"* (126). *And* (remember) *when Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl were raising the foundations of the House: "Our Lord! accept from us; surely Thou art the Hearing, the Knowing* (127). *Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee and* (raise) *from our offspring a group submitting to Thee, and show us our ways of devotion and turn to us* (mercifully), *surely Thou art the Oft-returning* (with mercy), *the Merciful* (128). *Our Lord! and raise up in them an Apostle from among themselves who shall recite to them Thy communications and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and purify them; surely Thou art the Mighty, the Wise"* (129).

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COMMENTARY

QUR'ÃN: *And* (remember) *when We made the House a rendezvous for men and a* (place of) *security:* It refers to the legislation of the *ḥajj* and the sanctuary offered by the House. "*al-Mathãbah*" (اَلمَثابَةُ = rendezvous; a place to which one returns) is derived from *thãba, yathũbu* (ثَابَ ، يَثُوبُ = he returned, he will return).

QUR'ÃN: *and take* (for yourselves) *a place of prayer on the standing-place of Ibrãhīm:* The conjunctive "and" joins this order with the preceding sentence turning that also into order.

In that case the complete sentence would have the following connotation: And when We told the people, return to, and do the *ḥajj* of the House and take (for yourself) a place of prayer. . . Other alternative, suggested by some exegetes, is to imply a deleted word "We said". Accordingly, the meaning would be: and We said, take (for yourselves) a place of prayer .. .

al-Muṣallã (اَلمُصَلّى) is deverbal noun of place, derived from *aṣ-ṣalãh* ((اَلصَّلوٰةُ) = to pray, to invoke) ; the sentence means: take (for yourselves) a place of prayer and invocation at the place where Ibrãhīm (a.s.) had stood.

Apparently, the preceding sentence is a sort of introduction, pointing to the reason why prayer in that place was prescribed; that is why this sentence does not put emphasis on "prayer" – in other words, it does not say, and pray in the standing-place of Ibrãhīm; it literally says, and take on the standing-place of Ibrãhīm (a.s.) a place of prayer.

QUR'ÃN: *And We enjoined Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl* (saying): *"Purify* (you two) *My House . . .": al-'Ahd* (اَلعَهْدُ = to enjoin, to obligate). The order to purify the House may mean to keep it exclusively reserved for the worship by those who go around it making circuits, those who abide in it for devotion, and those who pray in it. In this sense, it would be an *isti'ãrah bi 'l-kinãya,* and would imply: keep My House exclusively reserved for My worship. Alternatively, the order may be to keep it clean; to be on guard lest it is dirtied by careless people.

ar-Rukka'(اَلرُّكَّعُ) and *as-sujũd* (اَلسُّجُودُ) are plurals of *ar-raki'* (اَلرَّاكِعُ) = one who bows down) and *as-sãjid* (اَلسَّاجِدُ) = one who prostrates, one who does *sajdah*) respectively, the phrase refers to those who pray.

QUR'ÃN: *And* (remember) *when Ibrãhīm said: "My Lord! make it a secure town . . . ":* In this way Ibrãhīm (a. s.) called on his Lord to bestow security and safety as well as sustenance on the residents of Mecca; and the prayer was granted. Far be it from Allãh to quote in His speech an unaccepted prayer without hinting at its rejection; if He were to do so, His talk would

amount to a vain ridicule – far beneath the sublime dignity of His truthful speech. He says: . . . *and the truth do I speak* (*38:83*)*; Most surely it is a decisive word, and it is no a jest* (86 :13 – 14).

The Qur'ãn has quoted numerous prayers which this great prophet had pleaded before his Lord for; for example, his prayer for himself in the beginning of his life; his prayer at the time of his emigration to Syria; his invocation to keep his good name alive; his prayer for himself, for his progeny and parents, and for the believing men and women; his invocation, after building the House, for the residents of Mecca; his prayer and pleading for a Prophet to be sent from among his progeny. His prayers and the favours he asked from Allãh are a canvas which graphically shows his hopes and expectations, creates before our eyes a clear picture of his endeavours and efforts in the way of Allãh, and provides a glimpse of his sublime spiritual virtues. In short, these prayers show his status before Allãh and his nearness to Him. One may write a detailed history of his life, basing it on his stories and the laudatory phrases used for him in the Qur'ãn; and we shall write something on these lines in Chapter 6 (The Cattle).

QUR'ÃN : *such of them as believe:* Ibrãhīm (a. s.) asked his Lord to give the residents of Mecca security and provide them with fruits. At the same time he realized that not all of the residents would be believers, that some of them would be unbelievers; also he understood that his prayer for their sustenance was general – it covered the believers as well as the unbelievers; and he was aware that he had already declared himself to be separate from the unbelievers and their idols (as Allãh says about him: *but when it became clear to him that he, that is, his father, was an enemy of Allãh, he declared himself to be clear of him* [9:114] . Here Allãh bears witness that Ibrãhīm [a.s.] had declared his separation from every enemy of Allãh, not expecting even his father). In this background, as soon as he realized that his prayer included both the believers and the unbelievers, he added the proviso, "such of them as believe. . .", although he was well aware that, according to the social structure of this world, sustenance could not be given

only to the believing group, to the exclusion of the unbelievers; yet he qualified his prayer. Even so, Allãh knows better how He should decide about His creatures and what He should decree concerning them. Therefore, Ibrãhīm's prayer was granted for the believers, and was extended to cover the unbelievers also. The reply given to Ibrãhīm (a.s.) implies that Allãh would give them sustenance according to the system He has created in this world; in other words, believers and unbelievers both would be given their livelihood, because restricting it to the believers would entail unnecessarily breaking the usual and established system.

Ibrãhīm (a.s.) could have said: and provide the believers of this town with fruits; but he did not, because what he wanted to ask was an attraction, a dignity, for the town which would be centred around the Sacred House of Allãh. That House was built in a valley devoid of every agricultural produce; and if it were not provided with fruits and food-stuff, nobody would settle in it, and the place would remain uninhabited.

QUR'ÃN: *"And whoever disbelieves, I will grant him enjoyment for a short while :* The word translated, "I will grant him enjoyment", has been read *umti'uhũ* (أُمْتِعُهُ) and *umatti'uhũ* (أُمَتِّعُهُ) from the verbal noun's paradigms *al-if'ãl* (اَلإِفعْالُ) and *at-taf-'īl*(اَلتَّفْعِيلُ) respectively. Meaning of both readings is the same.

QUR'ÃN: *then I will drive him to the chastisement . . . ":* It further shows the great dignity of the House and is meant to give even more pleasure to Ibrãhīm (a.s.). The import of the verse is as follows: I have granted your prayer (to increase this House's honour by giving sustenance to its believing residents) and have decided to include even the unbelievers in that livelihood; but the unbelievers should not be deluded by that; they should not think that the sustenance comes to them because they have got any honour in the eyes of Allãh; it is actually in honour of this town, because I have accepted your prayer and given you more than you had asked. As for the unbeliever, I will surely drive him to the chastisement of the Fire and it is an evil destination.

QUR'ÃN: *And* (remember) *when Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl were raising the foundations of the House: al-Qawã'id* (اَلْقَوَاعِدُ) is plural of *al-ga'idah* (اَلْقَاعِدَةُ) which literally means that part of building which "sits" in the earth' ; hence it has been translated as foundation, upon which the rest of the building is raised. "Raising the foundations" is an allegorical expression, it counts the walls (which were raised upon foundations) as a part of the foundation; another allegorical aspect is to ascribe the rise to the foundations alone without mentioning the walls, although it were the walls which were raised. The words "of the House", point to the intended allegory.

QUR'ÃN: "*Our. Lord! accept from us; surely Thou art the Hearing, the Knowing :* The prayer comes direct from Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl, without any introductory clause like "They said" or "They prayed"; such a clause is not even implied here. When we read the words, "when Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl were raising the foundations of the House", the scene is flashed before our eyes; it is as though we see them busy building the walls, and then we dramatically hear their voices and their prayer directly from them – there is no need of any intermediary to report to us what they said or did. Such dramatic presentation is often used in the Qur'ãn, and it is among its most beautiful styles – and all its styles are beautiful. It presents the story in the most effective way, bringing it within the purview of our senses. It is a style which surpasses all manners of narration and reporting.

Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl did not mention the thing or action which they prayed to Allãh to accept, that is, they did not say, accept from us this construction' of Thy House. It shows their humbleness and humility before their Lord; they thought that it was a very insignificant work on their part and was not worthy of their Lord. This omission of the object has given the following connotation to their prayer: Our Lord! accept from us this in-significant deed, although it is not worthy of Thy name; surely Thou art hearing our prayers, knowing our intentions.

QUR'ÃN: *Our Lord! And make us both submissive to thee and* (raise) *from our offspring a group submitting to Thee.* The words translated here as submissive and submitting are *muslim* (مُسْلِم) and its feminine *muslimah* (مُسْلِمَة)*,* respectively. Obviously, the definition of Islam, with which we are familiar, and which comes to our minds as soon as we hear the word, Islam, is just the elementary grade of servitude; it distinguishes a professed convert from the one who openly rejects the faith. This elementary Islam means professing the matters of faith and doing necessary deeds, no matter whether it is done with true belief or hypo-critically. Now, Ibrãhīm (a.s.) was a prophet, a messenger and one of the five *ulu 'l-'azm* apostles, who gave us the upright faith. It is unthinkable that such a great prophet had not attained, at the time when he was praying, this most elementary grade of Islam. Likewise, his son, Ismã'īl (a.s.), was a messenger of Allãh and had been offered as sacrifice in His way. Can it be said that they had got that much Islam but were unaware of it? Or that, although they were aware of having attained to that Islam but wanted to continue on it? Just look at the context of the prayer: Those who prayed were so near to Allãh; they were praying while building His Sacred House; they knew whom they were praying to, and who He was and how great His splendour is. Could they, in that position, ask for such a trivial grade from the Lord Almighty? Moreover, this grade of Islam is among those things which are within the power of man himself; and that is why man can be ordered to accept it; as Allãh says: *When his Lord said to him: "Be a Muslim", he said: "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds"* (2:131). Obviously, such a quality or action cannot be attributed to Allãh; likewise, it is meaningless to ask from Allãh to do a work which has been placed within the power of the man himself. (Of course, it may be done if there is some special condition which makes Divine interference justifiable.)

Therefore, the Islam they had asked for was not that Islam whose definition we are familiar with. Islam has many grades, as may be see in the verse quoted above: *When his Lord said to him* (*i.e.,* Ibrãhīm) : *"Be a Muslim", he said: "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds"* (2:131). Ibrãhīm (a.s.) was ordered to be a Muslim at a time when he was already a Muslim. Clearly, the Islam which he was told to attain was other

than the Islam he had already attained. There are many such examples in the Qur'ãn.

This sublime grade of Islam – which we shall explain in detail later on – means total servitude, unconditional surrender of all a servant has got to his Master. No doubt it is within a man's power to prepare the conditions facilitating its attainment. Yet, when we look at an average man and the usual condition of his heart and mind, such a high standard seems beyond his power to attain. In other words, it is not possible for him – in the conditions surrounding him – to get to that sublime Islam. From this point of view, that Islam is not different from other positions of *al-wilãyah* (اَلوِلاَيَةُ = friendship of Allãh) and its lofty stages, or from other grades of perfection – all of them are beyond the reach of an average man, because he cannot fulfil their necessary conditions. In this sense, it is possible to count that Islam as a Divine gift which is beyond a man's power to attain by himself. Consequently, it is perfectly right for a man to pray to Allãh to bestow on him that sublime quality and make him a Muslim of that high rank.

Moreover, there is another deeper connotations: It is only actions which are attributed to man and emanate from his free will and power; as for his attributes and deep-rooted traits (which are etched on his psyche by repeated actions), they are in fact beyond his power. Therefore, they may be – or let us say, should be – attributed to Allãh, especially if they are good and virtuous attributes which should better be attributed to Allãh rather than to man. This observation is based on the style used in the Qur'ãn. For example:

"My *Lord! make me keep up prayer, and from my off-spring* (too) " (14:40) ;

" . . . *and join me with the good ones"* (26:83) ;

"My *Lord! grant me that I should be grateful for Thy bounty which Thou has bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I should do good such as Thou art pleased with, and make me enter, by Thy mercy, into Thy servants, the good ones"* (27:19);

"Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee and (raise)

from our offspring a group submitting to Thee (2:128).

It is now clear that the Islam which Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl had asked for was something different from the Islam to which the verse 49:14 refers: *The dwellers of the desert say: "We believe." Say: "You do not believe but say: 'We submit* (we accept Islam)'; *and faith has not yet entered into your hearts."*

The Islam they prayed for was of a high rank and sublime grade which we shall explain later on.

QUR'ÃN: *and show us our ways of devotion and turn to us* (mercifully), *surely Thou art the Oft-returning* (with mercy), *the Merciful:* This also points to the sublime meaning of Islam, just referred to *al-manãsik* (اَلمَناسِكُ = translated here as ways of devotion) is plural of *al-mansak* (اَلمَنسَكُ) which means "worship" or "act of worship", as Allãh says: *And to every nation We appointed* (acts of) *worship. . .* (22:34). It is *a maṣdar* used as the first construct of a genitive case. We have explained earlier that *a maṣdar* used in this way proves the existence of that work or action. Therefore, the phrase, "our ways of devotion", refers to those acts of worship which they were doing or had already done; it does not refer to any action which they intended to do in future. In this context, the phrase "show us" does not mean "teach us" or "help us to do"; rather it means "strengthen us by showing us the realities of our acts of worship", as we pointed out earlier while writing the verse: *and We revealed to them the doing of good* (deeds) *and the establishing of prayer and the giving of zakãt* (21:73). And later on we shall explain that the revelation mentioned in this verse means to strengthen the doer of that deed; it does not mean teaching them their responsibilities and obligations. Probably, it is to this reality that the verses 38: 45 – 46 refer: *And remember Our servants, Ibrãhīm and Isḥãq and Ya'qũb, men of strength and insight. Surely We purified them by a pure quality, the remembering of the* (final) *abode.*

The above explanation makes it clear that this prayer was for an Islam and an insight into worship completely different from ordinary meanings of these terms. The same is the case with their prayer, *tub 'alaynã* (تُبْ عَلَيْنا = usually translated as, forgive us) ;

Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl both were prophets, protected by Allãh from every error and sin; they could not make any mistake or error; they did not need Allãh's forgiveness and pardon as we do when we commit sins, (that is why we have translated it in literal way: *turn to us* mercifully).

Question: It is all right to interpret Islam, showing the ways of devotion and forgiveness in the way you have done maintaining the dignity of Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl (peace be on them both). But it is not necessary to apply the same meanings when these words are used for their offspring. Ibrãhīm (a.s.) did not include his offspring with himself and Ismã'īl, except in the prayer for Islam, and that also in a separate sentence. They did not say: Make us and a group of our offspring submissive to Thee; instead they prayed for themselves, and after that separately pleaded for their offspring, saying, "and (raise) from our offspring a group submitting to Thee". There should be no difficulty in believing that what they had in mind was Islam in its general meaning covering all its ranks and grades – even the most elementary one. Even this elementary grade of Islam gives good results and is instrumental in creating good environment in the society. It would not be wrong if Ibrãhīm (a.s.) asked his Lord for this Islam; even the Prophet invited people to just that type of Islam – if they testified that there was none to be worshipped except Allãh and Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) was His Messenger, they were accepted as Muslims, their lives were protected, marriage with them was allowed and they became entitled to inherit from their Muslim relatives. Therefore, it should be perfectly right to say that the two sentences refer to two separate ranks of Islam: "Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee", would mean the highest rank of Islam in conformity with the prestige of Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl; "and (raise) from our offspring a group submitting to Thee", would refer to the elementary grade of Islam befitting a nation which included hypocrites and people of weak faith as well as those with firm belief – and all are called Muslims.

Reply: Position of legislation for the guidance of people is totally different from the position of praying to Allãh, and

each has its own rules; what is valid on one plane is not necessarily good on the other. The Prophet prescribed a minimum standard for his *ummah,* that is, to utter the two testimonies of the Oneness of Allãh, and his own prophethood; it was done with a view to widen the circle of Islam and to protect the healthy religious system – that manifest Islam protected the essence of Islam as a shell protects the kernel.

But the plane of invocation and prayer to Allãh is much higher than that. At this level, appearances loose their value; it is the reality that matters here; the objective here is actuality and truth, and the desire is for nearness to Allãh. At this level, the prophets are not influenced by appearance. It was not because of any worldly love of his offspring that Ibrãhīm (a.s.) prayed for his progeny. Had it been so, he would have prayed first of all for his father and would not have declared his separation from him as soon as he came to know that he was an enemy of Allãh. Also, if he would have been concerned with appearances, he would not have prayed in the following words: *And disgrace me not on the day when they are raised, the day on which neither property will avail, nor sons, except him who comes to Allãh with a heart submissive* (26:87 – 89) ; nor would have he said: *And make for me a truthful tongue among the posterity* (26:84), instead he would have said, make for me a remembering tongue among the posterity.

Keeping all this in view, it is easy to understand that when he asked from his Lord to raise a Muslim group from among his offspring, he did not mean the elementary rank of Islam; he wanted for them the reality of Islam. The Qur'ãnic words, "a group submitting to Thee", support this interpretation. If he wanted only the appearance of Islam and not its essence, it was enough to say, "a group submitting", there was no need to add, "to Thee". (Ponder on this point.)

QUR'ÃN: *Our Lord! and raise up in them an Apostle from among themselves . . . :* He was praying for the Prophet; and the Prophet used to say: "I am the prayer of Ibrãhīm".

TRADITIONS

al-Kattãnī said: "I asked Abu Abdillãh (a.s.) about a man who forgot to pray two *rak'ahs* near the standing-place of Ibrãhīm, in *aṭ-ṭawãf* (اَلطَّوَافُ = circuit, circumambulation) of the *ḥajj* and *'umrah.* He (a.s.) said: 'If he is still in the town (Mecca), he should pray the two *rak'ahs* near the standing-place of Ibrãhim, because verily Allãh says: *and take* (for yourselves) *a place of prayer on the standing-place of Ibrãhīm;* and if he has departed (from it) then I will not order him to return.' " (*al-Kãfi*)

The author says: Almost similar traditions have been narrated by ash-Shaykh in *at-Tahdhīb* and by al-'Ayyãshī in his *at-Tafsīr* with several *asnãd* (*i.e.,* chains of narrators). Particulars of this rule (i.e., prayer should be offered near or behind the standing-place – as is narrated in some traditions that: "No-one should pray the two *rak'ahs* of *aṭ-ṭawãf* except behind the standing-place . . .") are inferred from the word *min* (مِنْ = from; here translated as *on*) used in the order, *and take. . . a place of prayer on* (or, from) *the standing-place.. .*

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said explaining the words of Allãh: *Purify* (you two) *My House . . .:* "Keep the polytheists away from it." (*at-Tafsīr,* al-Qummi)

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said: " Verily Allãh, Mighty and Great is He! says in His Book: *'Purify* (you two) My *House for those who make circuit and those who abide* (in it for devotion) *and those who bow down* (and) *those who prostrate themselves.'* Therefore, it is proper for a servant not to enter Mecca except that he is clean, (and) has washed away his sweat and dirt and has purified himself."

The author says: This meaning has been narrated in other traditions also. The idea, that if the place of arrival is clean then the one who arrives should make himself clean, may be inferred from other verses too. See, for example, the verse: *and the good things are for good ones and the good ones are for good things* (24:26).

Ibn ‘‘Abbãs said: “When Ibrãhīm brought Ismã‘īl and Hãjar, he settled them at Mecca; and a time passed; and the people of (the tribe of) Jurhum came to settle there and Ismã‘īl married a woman from that tribe; and Hãjar died; and Ibrãhīm asked permission of Sãrah (to visit Ismã‘īl) ; so she allowed him but imposed a condition on him that he would not come down (from his riding animal). Thus Ibrãhīm arrived (at Mecca) and Hãjar had died, so he went to the house of Ismã‘īl; and he asked his wife: ‘Where is your husband?’ She told him: ‘He is not here, he has gone hunting.’ And Ismã‘īl used to go outside al-Ḥaram (اَلحَرَم = the boundary) to hunt and then return. Ibrãhīm said to her: ‘Do you have anything to entertain a guest?’ She said: ‘I have nothing and there is nobody with me.’ Then Ibrãhīm said to her: ‘When your husband comes, tell him (my) *salãm* and tell him to change the threshold of his door.’ And Ibrãhīm went away. Then Ismã‘īl came and felt the scent of his father. So he asked his wife: ‘Had anyone come to you?’ She said: ‘An old man had come to me with such and such features (describing him scornfully).’ (Ismã‘īl) said: ‘Then what did he say to you?’ She said: ‘He said to me to give you (his) *salãm* and to tell you to change the threshold of your door.’ So, Ismã‘īl divorced her and married another (woman). Thereafter, Ibrãhīm remained (at his place) as long as Allãh wished him to remain (there). Then he asked permission of Sãrah to visit Ismã‘īl; and she allowed him, but (again) imposed the (same) condition that he should not come down (from his riding animal). Then Ibrãhīm came until he reached the door of Ismã‘īl. And he asked his wife: ‘Where is your husband?’ She said: ‘He has gone for hunting and, Allãh willing, he will come back just now; you come down, may Allãh have mercy upon you!’ He asked her: ‘Do you have anyting to entertain a guest?’ She said: ‘Yes.’ Then she brought milk and meat. (Ibrãhīm) thereupon prayed and blessed her. Had she brought on that day bread, wheat, barley or date, (Mecca) would have become the most plentiful of all the world in wheat, barley or date. Then she said to him: ‘(Please) come down so that I may wash your head.’ But he did not come down. So she brought (the stone which thereafter was known as) the standing-place (of Ibrãhīm) and put it on his (right) side, and he put

his foot on it, and his footmark was impressed on it; (in this way) she washed the right side of his head; then she shifted the stone to his left side and washed the left side of his head, and (again) his footmark was imprinted on it. Thereupon (Ibrãhīm) said to her: 'When your husband comes, give him (my) *salãm* and tell him that the threshold of his door is now in order.' When Ismã'īl (a.s.) came back, he felt the scent of his father, and asked his wife: 'Had anyone come to you?' She replied: 'Yes, a venerable (old) man, of loveliest features and most pleasant fragrance; he said to me this and this and I told him this and this; and I washed his head and this is the imprint of his feet on (his) standing-place.' (Hearing this), Ismã'īl said to her: 'That was Ibrãhīm.'' "(*Majma'u 'l-bayãn*)

The author says: al-Qummi has narrated in his *at-Tafsīr* a nearly similar tradition.

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said: "Verily, Ibrãhīm settled in a valley of Syria. When he got his son Ismã'īl from Hãjar, Sãrah was extremely grieved because she hereself had no child. And she used to hurt Ibrãhīm and make him unhappy with respect to Hãjar. So Ibrãhīm complained to Allãh about it, and Allãh sent a revelation to him: 'The likeness of woman is like the curved rib; if you leave it (as it is), you will benefit from it, but if you (try to) make it straight, you will break it.' Thereafter, (Allãh) ordered him to remove Ismã'īl and his mother (from that place). He said: 'O Lord! to which place?' (Allãh) said: 'To My holy place, and My sanctuary, and the part of the earth which I created first (of all the earth); and it is Mecca.' Then Allãh sent Jibrīl down to him with *al-Burãq**; and (Jibrīl) made Hãjar, Ismã'īl and Ibrãhīm ride on it. And whenever Ibrãhīm passed a good place with trees, cultivation and date-palms, he used to say: 'O Jibrīl! here? here?' And Jibrīl used to reply: 'No, go on, go on.' (It continued) until they reached Mecca and (Jibrīl) made them alight in the place where the House is.

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* *al-Burãq* is the name of the animal which was also sent to the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) to ride during *al-Mi'rãj* (اَلمِعْراج = Ascension). (*tr.*)

And Ibrãhīm had given Sãrah a promise that he would not come down until he came back to her. When they alighted in that place, there was a tree there; Hãjar spread on that tree a sheet she had with her, and thus they found a shade under it. When Ibrãhīm arranged their affairs and settled them there, he wished to leave them to return to Sãrah. Hãjar said to him: 'O Ibrãhīm! Are you leaving us in a place where there is neither human being to keep company nor water nor cultivation?' Ibrãhīm said: 'Allãh, Who has ordered me to settle you in this place, will suffice you.' Then he took leave of them. When he reached Kada' (a mountain in Dhu Ṭuwã), Ibrãhīm turned around and said: " O *our Lord! surely I have settled a part of my offspring in a valley uncultivable near Thy Sacred House, our Lord!, that they may establish prayer; therefore make the hearts of some people yearn towards them and provide them with fruits, haply they may be grateful"* (14:37). Then he went away, and Hãjar remained (there). When the sun rose high, Ismã'īl became thirsty; Hãjar stood at the running-place*, and she ascended the Ṣafã, and mirage glittered before her in the valley and she thought that it was water; so she descended to the valley and ran (to it). When she reached Marwah, she could not see Ismã'īl, therefore, she returned until she reached Ṣafã and again she looked (around, with the same effect) ; until she did likewise seven times. When she was on Marwah, in the seventh round, she looked at Ismã'īl and lo! water had appeared from under his feet. She returned and gathered sand around the water – the water was flowing and she "reined" (Arabic: زَمَّتْ = *zammat*) it with (the sand) which she put around it, and that is why it was called *zamzam.* And the (tribe of) Jurhum had come down at *Dhu 'l-majaz* and *Arafat.* When water appeared at Mecca, the birds and wild animals gathered around it; the Jurhum saw this gathering of the birds and animals at that place and followed them until they found a woman and a child settled there – they were sitting in the shade of the tree and the water had appeared for them.

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* The place between Ṣafã and Marwah where the *ḥãjis* (pilgrims to Mecca) run seven times. (*tr.*)

They said to Hãjar: 'Who are you? And what is the matter with you and this child?' She said: 'I am the mother of the son of Ibrãhīm, the friend of Allãh, and this is his son; Allãh has ordered him to settle us here.' They asked her: 'Would you allow us to remain near you?' She told them: 'Until Ibrãhīm comes.' When Ibrãhīm came to visit them the third day, Hãjar said: 'O friend of Allãh! there are some people of Jurhum here; they request you to allow them to settle near us; so will you allow them?' Ibrãhīm said: 'Yes.' Then Hãjar allowed them and they settled near them, and erected their tents. In this way Hãjar and Ismã'īl got on friendly terms with them. When Ibrãhīm came to see them the second time, he looked at the large number of people around them, and he was extremely happy. When Ismã'īl grew up – and each one of the Jurhum had presented one or two goats to Ismã'īl – so Hãjar and Ismã'īl supported themselves with them. When Ismã'īl came of age, Allãh ordered Ibrãhīm to build the House . . . When Allãh ordered Ibrãhīm to build the House, he did not know where to build it; so Allãh sent Jibrīl and he drew a line at the site of the House . . . So, Ibrãhīm built the House and shifted Ismã'īl from Dhũ Ṭuwã. And he raised (the House) nine hands in height. Then (Jibrīl) led him to the place of the (Black) Stone, and Ibrãhīm took it out and fixed it in the place where it is at present. When he built it, he made two doors for it, one in the east and the other in the west; and the door that was in the west is (now) called al-Mustajãr. Then he put on it tree (-trunks) and *al-adhkhar* (اَلأَذْخَرْ = a sweet smelling grass) (as roof). And Hãjar put on the door a sheet she had with her and under which they used to sit. When he built and completed it, Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl performed their *ḥajj.* Jibrīl came to them on the day of *at-tarwiyah,* that is, 8th *Dhu 'l-ḥijjah,* and said: 'O Ibrãhīm! stand up and quench your thirst from water' (because there was no water in Minã or 'Arafãt) ; that is why it was named the day of *at-tarwiyah* (اَلتَّرْوِيَةُ = to quench thirst). Then (Jibrīl) took him out to Mina and he stayed there in the night, and Jibrīl did with Ibrãhīm what he had done with Ãdam. Thus, when Ibrãhīm completed the construction of the House, he said: 'My *Lord! make it a secure town and provide its people with fruits, such of them*

as believe in Allãh . . .' " The Imãm explained the fruits as the fruits of the hearts, that is, make people love them, so that they may befriend them and return to them (year after year). (*at-Tafsīr,* al-Qummi)

The author says: This is the gist of this story, and it covers many of the traditions narrated about this subject. Some other traditions say that there had happened many miraculous things in the history of the House. For example, some traditions say that the House in the very beginning was a dome of light; it had descended on Ãdam and settled in the place where in later days Ibrãhīm built the Ka'bah; and that dome remained in the place till the deluge of Nũḥ; when the earth was submerged in water, Allãh took that dome up; and its site was not submerged, that is why the Ka'bah is called the Ancient House.

Other traditions say that Allãh sent the foundation of the House down from the Garden.

Yet others say that the Black Stone came down from the Garden – and it was whiter than snow – then it turned black when it was touched by the unbelievers.

Also it is narrated from al-Bãqir or aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) that he said: "Verily Allãh ordered Ibrãhīm to build the Ka'bah and to raise its walls and to show the people their ways of devotion (i.e., *ḥajj*). Thereupon, Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl built the House, every day (the height of) a knee until it reached the place of the Black Stone." And al-Bãqir (a.s.) said: "Then the (mountain) Abu Qubays called to him: 'I have something in trust for you;' and it gave him the (Black) Stone, and he put it in its place." (*al-Kãfī*)

ath-Thawrī says: "I asked Abu Ja'far (a.s.) about the Stone. He said: 'Three stones came down from the Garden: the Black Stone which was put in place by Ibrãhīm, and the Standing-place of Ibrãhīm, and the stone of the Israelites.' " (al-'Ayyãshī)

And a tradition says that the Black Stone was an angel.

The author says: There are very many such traditions narrated by both the Shī'ah and the Sunni narrators; and although

these traditions are *ãḥãd* and do not reach, in words or meanings, the standard required for *a mutawãtir* narration, still they are not unique in the field of religious descriptions, nor is there any reason to discard them altogether.

As for the narration that the dome was sent down to Ãdam or that Ibrãhīm rode *al-Buraq* for his journey to Mecca and other such miraculous happenings which have a super-natural character, there is no reason to say that they were impossible. Moreover, Allãh had given His prophets many such miracles and super-natural signs, and the Qur'ãn mentions many such events.

So far as the coming down of the foundations of the House, the Black Stone and the Standing Stone (which is said to be fixed in the structure now known as the Standing-place of Ibrãhīm) and other such things are concerned, there are many such examples found in the Qur'ãn and *ḥadīth.* Many vegetables and fruits etc. are said to be from the Garden, or from the Fire and its out-burst. Of the same genre are the traditions of "substance" saying that the substance of the good people is from the Garden and that of the evil ones is from the Fire; or that they are from *al-'illiyyīn* (اَلعِلّيِّينُ = lofty place; the Book of the deeds of the virtuous) and *as-sijjīn* (اَلسِّجّينُ = prison; the Book of the deeds of the evil ones), respecttively. Of similar nature are the traditions to the effect that the Garden of *al-barzakh* (the period between death and the Day of Judgment) is in some specified place on this earth, and the Fire of *al-barzakh* in some other place in it; and that the grave is either a section of the Garden's or a pit of the Fire's. There are many such informations which one is sure to come upon while studying the traditions. And, as we said earlier, they are so huge in number that the whole lot cannot be discarded, nor is it possible to question its authenticity. They are parts of the Divine realities expounded by the Qur'ãn and followed by the traditions. The fact is that all the things seen in this material world have been sent down by Allãh; whatsoever is good and lovely, or is a means to or a receptacle of good, has come down from the Garden and will return to it; and whatsoever is bad and evil, or is a means to or a receptacle of evil, has come down from the Fire and will return

to it. Allãh says: *And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure* (15:21). It shows that everything exists with Allãh, and it is an existence without any limit or measure; when it is sent down – a gradual descent – then it becomes subject to limits and measures. This verse describes the descent of all things in general. But there are also in the Qur'ãn specific examples of this descent. Allãh says: *. . . and He has sent down for you eight of the cattle in pairs. . .* (39:6)*; . . . and We have sent down the iron . . .* (57:25) *; And in the heaven is your sustenance, and what you are promised* (51:22). We shall further explain the meanings of these verses in their proper places, Allãh willing. They however prove that every thing descends to this world from Allãh. Other verses show that they are also to return to him, as He says: *And that to your Lord is the end goal* (53:42)*; Surely to your Lord is the return* (96:8)*; . . . to Him is the eventual coming* (40:3) *; . . . now surely to Allãh do all affairs eventually come* (42:53). There are many verses in the Qur'ãn of the same connotation.

Also, Allãh has made it clear that every thing – and all things presently are in middle of their journey – follows a course demanded by its origin, and that origin has some effect on its success and failure, its good and evil, as the Qur'ãn says: *Say: "Every one acts according to his own manner . . ."* (17:84) ; *And every one has a direction to which he should turn . . .* (2:148). We shall explain all these verses in their places; here they have been quoted just to complete the picture, and make the subject of our discussion clearer. What these verses prove is this: There is reason to believe that the traditions which say about a material thing that it came down from the Garden or from the Fire (when that thing has some connection with the next life's happiness or unhappiness) are on the whole correct, because they are, generally speaking, in conformity with the Qur'ãnic principles – although it does not mean that each and every such tradition is correct or trustworthy. Ponder on this point.

Someone has said: "The Divine words: *And* (*remember*) *when*

Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl were raising the foundations of the House . . ., manifestly show that the two prophets built this House for the worship of Allãh in that country of the idol-worshippers. But the story-tellers and those exegetes who followed them have embroidered what Allãh had said. They have added a lot of fanciful details, as, for example, that the House was from the very beginning and Ãdam did its *ḥajj;* that it was taken to the heaven during Null's flood; that the Black Stone was one of the stones of the Garden. Their main purpose was to present the religion in an attractive garment, adorning it with fascinating narratives. Such myths may impress the masses; but the people who have knowledge and wisdom know that spiritual excellence depends on Divine bestowal – it is Allãh Who makes one thing to excel the others. The Ka'bah has excellence because it is the House of Allãh, that is, attributed to Him; the Black Stone is excellent because people have been ordered to kiss it – in this respect it represents the hand of Allãh. It has no bearing on its excellence whether originally it was a ruby or a pearl or some other rock; nor do such tales add to its real glory. In reality it makes no difference in the eyes of Allãh whether a stone is black or white. The Ka'bah has got its distinction and honour because Allãh has called it His House, and has appointed it as the centre for various acts of worship which cannot be performed in any other place – its glory does not lie in the fact that its stones are more valuable than other stones, or that its site is the most attractive of all, or that it was sent down from the lofty heavens. Likewise, the excellence of the prophets is not based on any distinctive feature of their bodies nor on the quality of their apparel. They got excellence because Allãh chose them especially, and selected them for His prophethood which is a spiritual thing; otherwise many people in the world were far superior to them in their adornments and enjoyed greater worldly bounties."

He continues to say: "These traditions are untrustworthy because they contradict each other and some are self-contradictory; they are unauthentic because their chains of narrators are not correct; they are unacceptable because they go against the apparent meaning of the Qur'ãn."

He further says: “These traditions are Israelite myths, propagated among the Muslims by unbelieving Jews to make Islam look ridiculous, in order to keep the People of the Book away from it.”

The author says: There is a grain of truth in some things he has said: But he has gone far beyond the limit in disputation, and consequently has lost his bearings and arrived at a hypothesis much more atrocious and repugnant, Let us have a critical look at his arguments:

Objection: “These traditions are untrustworthy and unacceptable because they contradict each other and are against the Qur’ãn.”

Reply: The fact that some of them contradict the others could be a matter of worry if we were to accept them one by one as separate independent units. But when we accept the whole in their collective capacity (i.e., when we say that the whole lot should not be discarded because, taken all together, they do not tell us anything that is against reason or against the Qur’ãn or accepted traditions), then it is of no importance if there some minor discrepancies between individual traditions. But one point must be made clear here: What we have said just now, concerns the traditions narrated from the infallible sources like the Prophet and his sinless family members. So far as other exegetes among the Companions and their disciples are concerned, they, in this respect, are just like any other people; for us it makes no difference whether their talk is free from contradiction or riddled with it.

In short, there is no justification to discard a tradition, or a group of traditions, unless it goes against the Qur’ãn or other authentic traditions, or the marks of forgery and lie are stamped on it. (However, when it comes to the basic religious knowledge and fundamental beliefs, the only thing accepted as proof is the Book of Allãh and the authentic traditions of the Prophet and his sinless progeny; nothing else counts in this area.)

It is now clear that there are some things which must be accepted, that is, the Qur’ãn and the authentic traditions; and

there are others which must be rejected, that is, all that goes against the Qur'ãn and the authentic traditions. Then there is a third group: the traditions concerning which there is neither any proof compelling us to reject it, nor forcing us to accept it. These are the traditions which are neither impossible in reason nor unacceptable according to the Qur'ãn and authentic traditions – and there is no reason why they should be discarded altogether.

Objection: These traditions are unauthentic according to their chains of narrators.

Reply: The above given explanation also dispels this doubt, because weakness of the chains of narrators does not oblige us to reject the whole group, unless it is against the reason, the Qur'ãn or the authentic traditions.

Objection: They are against the words of Allãh; *And* (remember) *when Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl were raising the foundation of the House..* .

Reply: I wish I knew how this verse proves that the Black Stone was not from the Garden! Or, that the dome did not come down to that place in Ãdam's time (and there was, therefore, no question of its being taken up at the time of the flood)! The only thing the verse says is that this construction, made of stone and mud, was built by Ibrãhīm. What has this got to do – either for or against – the traditions mentioned earlier. The only difficulty with those traditions is that the objector does not like them. And this dislike is based, not on the principles of religion, but on his biased views. He does not believe that the prophets had any spiritual realities within them; he does not think that the exoteric side of religion is based on its esoteric aspect; he unconsciously is so much over-awed by today's natural sciences that he tries to find a material cause not only for material happenings but even for spiritual things – if they have even a slight connection with matter. For him, the matter rules over all happenings, not excepting the sociological principles.

This man should have pondered on this point: The natural sciences deal with the matter; its properties and its various

compounds; they look at the relationship of a natural effect with its cause. Likewise, the various sociological disciplines study the social relationships among various event taking place in society.

But the natural and sociological sciences have no concern at all with the realities which are beyond the sphere of matter, outside its field of action; they have no jurisdiction even over immaterial connections existing between a material thing and an event taking place in the visible world. The natural sciences and disciplines have no authority or right to confirm or reject these immaterial realities. It is within the jurisdiction of natural science to say that construction of a house depends on things like mud, stone and mason; it may explain how black stones may take the shape of a room. Likewise, sociological disciplines may describe the factors which led to the building of the Ka'bah – it may explain a part of Ibrãhīm's biography, Hãjar's life, Ismã'īl's story, history of Tahamah, arrival of the tribe of Jurhum and things like that. But these sciences and disciplines have no right to discuss what was the relation between a certain stone on one hand and the Garden or the Fire on the other; nor have these branches of knowledge any right to express any affirmative or negative opinion about such narratives.

And you have seen that the Qur'ãn clearly says that even material and physical things have been sent down from the treasure which is with Allãh, and that they would ultimately return to Him – either to the Garden or to the Fire. Also, the Qur'ãn says that the deeds and actions – which are but physical movements and positions – ascend to Allãh acid arrive at His presence: *To Him do ascend the good words, and the good deed lifts them up* (35 :10) ; again it says: *to Him reaches the piety on your part* (22:37), and piety is but action or a characteristic acquired through repeated actions. It is essential for a student of religion to meditate on these verses and to understand that the religious realities do not have any relationship with material or sociological matters *per se;* they depend on the facts which are beyond the reach of material disciplines.

Objection: The excellence of the prophets, and the things

attributed to them like the Ka‘bah or the Black Stone, is not based on a material quality; it is a spiritual excellence bestowed by the Divine Grace.

Reply: What he says is right. But he should understand what is the real meaning of what he says. What is that spiritual reality which creates excellence? Is it a mentally posited abstract idea created by social needs, like the designations and offices found in every nation, for example, presidency, leadership of the party, the high price of gold and silver, respect of the parents, sanctity of the laws of the land? All these are subjective and imaginative abstract forms which the societies have laid down to meet their own needs; but they have no existence outside the imagination, beyond subjective consideration. Such honours and distinctions cannot be found outside the social life which created them to fulfil its needs; and Allãh is too sublime for such needs to reach His presence. Therefore, such social distinctions have no relevance to an excellence given by Allãh to any of His creatures.

If the objector thinks that the excellence of the prophets is just like the above-mentioned imaginary and unreal honours, then why should a house or a stone be denied a similar excellence? And if he believes that an excellence given by Allãh is the real one, as is found in light *vis-à-vis* darkness, in knowledge *vis-à-vis* ignorance, and in wisdom *vis-à-vis* idiocy, then of course it would be a real and actual excellence. In that case, the quiddity of the existence of a prophet would be different from the quiddity of other human beings – even if our senses are unable to grasp it. And such real excellence and distinction is in keeping with the sublimity and sanctity of the Divine actions and wisdom. Allãh says: *And We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them in sport. We did not create them both but with the truth, but most of them do not know* (44:38 – *39*). Such a distinction is real, spiritual, metaphysical and beyond the reach of physical nature. And if such real excellence may be given to the prophets, why can it not be bestowed on some other things, like the Ka‘bah and the Black Stone etc.? And, may be, it is this real immaterial excellence which has been

described in such words that the people could easily understand.

Would that I knew what would such people do about those Qur'ãnic verses which say that the people of the Garden will be given cups, ornaments and dresses of gold and silver. These two metals have no inherent excellence except that their price remains high because of their scarcity. If so, then why should they be used for exalting the people of the Garden? What wealth will they represent in the Garden? After all, the economics of this world will not be valid there!

These and other such Divine words and exoteric expressions are the curtains which hide the esoteric realities; they are the veils covering Divine secrets. And if such expressions are accept-able for the realities of the next world, they can as easily be used for some facts of this one.

az-Zubayri says: "I said to Abu 'Abdillãh (a.s.): 'Tell me about the *ummah* of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), who are they?' He said: 'The *ummah* of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) are the Children of Hãshim in particular.' I said: 'And what is the proof that the *ummah* of Muhammad are his family members you have mentioned, to the exclusion of the others?' He said: '(It is) the words of Allãh: *And* (remember) *when Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl were raising the foundations of the House: "Our Lord! accept from us; surely Thou art the Hearing, the Knowing. Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee and* (raise) *from our offspring a group* (ummah) *submitting to Thee, and show us our ways of devotion and turn to us* (mercifully), *surely Thou art the Oft-returning* (with mercy), *the Merciful."* When Allãh answered the prayer of Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl and did (promise to) raise from their offspring a submissive *ummah* and raised up in them an Apostle from among themselves, that is, from among that *ummah* itself, to recite to them His communications, and to teach them the Book and the wisdom, Ibrãhīm beseeched Allãh for another bounty; and asked for that *ummah* purity from polytheism and idol-worship in order that the affair of that Apostle might remain firm and strong among them and they might not need to follow anyone other than themselves. That is why Ibrãhīm said: *"and save me and my sons from worshipping idols:* My *Lord! Surely they have led*

many men astray; then whoever follows me, he is surely of me, and whoever disobeys me, Thou surely art Forgiving, Merciful" (14:35 – 36). It proves that the Imãms, and the submissive *ummah* in which Muhammad (s. a. w. a.) was raised, cannot be except from the offspring of Ibrãhīm (a.s.), because he had said: *"save me and my sons from worshipping idols" ' ".* (al-'Ayyãshī)

The author says: The argument of the Imãm is absolutely clear. Ibrãhīm (a. s.) had asked this submissive *ummah* to be from his offspring in particular; and the next sentence, *"Our Lord! and raise up in them an Apostle from among themselves. . .",* show that the same submissive group is the *ummah* of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) – and the word, *ummah,* as used here, does not refer to the people whom Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) was sent to; nor to those who answered his call and believed in his prophethood, because that *ummah is* not confined to the offspring of Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl; the word in the present context refers to a particular submissive *ummah* from the offspring of Ibrãhīm (a.s.). There-after, Ibrãhīm (a.s.) prayed to his Lord to protect him and his sons from idol-worship, to keep them away from polytheism and error – and this Divine protection is *'iṣmah* (infallibility; sinlessness). Also we know that there were a lot of people among the offspring of Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl – the Arabs of the Muḍar, or particularly the Quraysh – who had gone astray and worshipped idols. It proves that when Ibrãhīm (a.s.) prayed for his "sons" to be protected from idol-worship, he did not mean all his sons; he was praying only for his infallible offspring, that is, the Prophet and his purified progeny. These, then, are the *ummah* of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) in the prayer of Ibrãhīm (a.s.). Probably, it was for this fine distinction that Ibrãhīm (a.s.) changed the word, "offspring", to "sons"; this view is strengthened by the phrases following this prayer, *"then whoever follows me, he is surely of me, and whoever disobeys me, Thou surely art Forgiving, Merciful".* Note the opening word, "then", which shows that what follows is based on what has preceded; thereafter, he confirms that those who would follow him would be from him, a part of him; but then

he stops and does not say anything about the opposite group, as though he does not recognize them, they are strangers to him. (Think it over.)

The Imãm said that Ibrãhīm (a.s.) "asked for that *ummah* purity from polytheism and idol-worship". Actually, he had asked protection only from worshipping the idols; but then he mentioned why he had asked for that protection: surely the idols have led many men astray. In this way, the original prayer for protection from idol-worship became an all-encompassing prayer for protection from all types of straying and error, ranging from idol-worship to small sins – because every sin is a sort of polytheism, as we have already explained under the verse: *The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours . . .* (1:7).

The Imãm said: "It proves that the Imãms, and the submissive *ummah* in which Muhammad (s. a. w. a.) was raised, cannot be except from _ the offspring of Ibrãhīm (a.s.)." That is the Imãms are the submissive *ummah,* and they are from the offspring of Ibrãhīm (a.s.), as explained above.

Objection: You say that the word, *ummah,* in this verse refers to a small group of the Muslims, and not to the whole nation; you use the same interpretation in some other verses, for example, *You are the best nation raised up for* (the benefit of) *men . . .* (3:110). But this obliges us to interpret the word in a metaphorical way – without any justifiable reason. Moreover, the Qur'ãn addresses itself to the whole *ummah* who believed in the Prophet; it is a self-evident fact which does not need any proof.

Reply: It was long after the revelation of the Qur'ãn and the spread of Islam that the phrase, *ummah* of Muhammad, was popularly used for "all those who believe in his prophethood". It is a later usage.

The original meaning of this word is "people", "nation", "group", as Allãh says: *and blessing on you and the people* (*umam* = plural of *ummah*) *from among those who are with you; and there shall be people* (*umam*). . . (11:48). This word is sometimes used even for one person; *Surely Ibrãhīm was a*

"people" (devoutly) *obedient to Allãh* (16:120). Therefore, it is the context or the intention of the speaker which decides how big or small a circle this word describes in a sentence. Now the words, *Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee and* (raise) *from our offspring a group submitting to Thee,* were spoken in prayer, and as explained earlier, they could refer to only a selected group out of the multitude who believe in the Prophet. Likewise, the verse, *You are the best nation raised up for* (the benefit of) *men,* was revealed to show the favour of Allãh on the people thus addressed; its import is to increase their prestige and enhance their dignity. Surely, these words could be addressed to the whole *ummah* who call themselves Muslims. How could it apply to the Pharaohs and Dajjals of this *ummah* who did not leave any vestige of the religion without destroying, and who did not come across any religious virtue without crushing it? (We shall explain it in detail when writing on this verse.) In short, this verse is like the talk of Allãh with the Children of Israel: *and that I made you excel the nations* (2:47) ; we should not forget that a man like Qãrũn was one of them, and surely this talk does not include him. Likewise, the complaint of the Prophet, " O *my Lord! surely my people treated this Qur'ãn as a forsaken thing"* (*25:* 30), cannot cover all his *ummah* – there are among them the lovers of the Qur'ãn, *the men whom neither merchandise nor selling diverts from the remembrance of Allãh.* On the other hand, there is the verse 2:134, which is addressed to the whole *ummah,* and covers all those who believed in the Prophet and even those to whom he was sent: *This is a people that have passed away; they shall have what they earned and you shall have what you earn, and you shall not be called upon to answer for what they did.*

AN ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

Ponder on the story of Ibrãhīm (a.s.) ; study his life; see how he took his son and wife to the land where now Mecca stands, and settled them there; how their lives progressed until finally the "sacrifice" of Ismã'īl took place and, in the last moment,

he was ransomed by Allãh; read how they together built the Ka'bah. You will find that it is a complete cycle of devotional journey. It shows how a servant proceeds from his "self" to his Lord, from a far away station to the centre of "Divine Nearness"; how the journey is accomplished avoiding the vanities of this world, shunning its protection, keeping away from its desires – prestige, wealth, women and children – freeing oneself from the intrigues of satans, not letting them pollute the purity of intention, and turning with total surrender and progressing with complete devotion to the Lord, the Great, the High.

These apparently unrelated events are in fact of an unbroken series. They are historical narratives, but they describe the stages of the spiritual journey of a servant from self to the Lord. They teach us the discipline of that journey, instruct us in the rules and manners of seeking nearness to Allãh, of reaching His presence. The more you meditate on his story, the deeper will be your spiritual understanding – you will come to know the demands of Divine love and sincere devotion.

Allãh ordered His friend, Ibrãhīm, to promulgate the *ḥajj* for the people, and He says: *And proclaim among men the ḥajj; they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, coming from every remote path. . .* (22:27). We do not know the details of the laws of the *ḥajj* as promulgated by Ibrãhīm (a.s.). But we know that the *ḥajj* continued as an event of great religious importance even among the Arabs of the days of ignorance. Then Allãh sent the Prophet and he gave us the rules of the *ḥajj* as we know them. One thing is certain: He did not go against the rules laid down by Ibrãhīm (a.s.) ; what he did was to complete and perfect them. This fact may be inferred from the words of Allãh: *Say: "Surely,* (as for) *me, my Lord has guided me to the straight path;* (to) *a most right religion, the faith of Ibrãhīm, the upright one"* . . . (6:161); *He has prescribed for you of the religion what He enjoined upon Nũḥ and that which We have revealed unto you, and that which We enjoined upon Ibrãhīm and Mũsã and* 'Isã . . . (42:13).

In any case, all the devotional acts of the *ḥajj* – the *iḥrãm,* staying at 'Arafãt, staying overnight at Mash'ar, sacrificing an

animal, throwing pebbles at the pillars, running between the Ṣafã and the Marwah, going around Ka‘bah, praying near the Standing-place – all these acts commemorate the events that had happened to Ibrãhīm, and represent the stands taken by him and his family; and how admirable stands they were – the pure and sublime Divine stands to which they were led by Divine mercy and urged on by the humility of servitude.

The prescribed acts of worship – on their promulgator be the best of *salams!* – are the symbols of the stands of the perfect ones, the prophets, *vis-à-vis* their Lord; every act of worship is a photo which shows to us a stage in their spiritual journey to the station of nearness to Allãh, as Allãh says: *Certainly* (there) *is for you in the Messenger of Allãh an excellent example. . .* (33: 21). This is a basic reality. And there is much evidence pointing to this theme in the traditions which have come down to us regarding the philosophy of various acts of worship and the esoteric aspects of their legislation and prescription, as any diligent scholar may find out.

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وَمَنْ يَرْغَبُ عَنْ مِلَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَفِهَ نَفْسَهُ وَلَقَدِ اصْطَفَيْنَاهُ
فِي الدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ـ ١٣٠ . إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ
أَسْلِمْ قَالَ أَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ـ ١٣١ . وَوَصَّى بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بَنِيهِ
وَيَعْقُوبُ يَا بَنِيَّ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَى لَكُمُ الدِّينَ فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ
مُسْلِمُونَ ـ . أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ الْمَوْتُ إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ
مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِي قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ إِلَٰهَكَ وَإِلَٰهَ آبَائِكَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ
وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِلَٰهًا وَاحِدًا وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ـ ١٣٣ . تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ
قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُمْ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا
يَعْمَلُونَ ـ ١٣٤ .

And who turns away from the religion of Ibrãhīm but he who makes himself a fool; and most certainly We chose him in this world, and in the hereafter, he is most surely among the good ones (130). *When his Lord said to him, Submit* (yourself) *he said: "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds"* (131). *And the same did Ibrãhīm enjoin on his sons and* (*so* did) *Ya'qũb: "O my sons! surely Allãh has chosen for you* (*this*) *faith, therefore die not unless you are Muslims"* (132). *Or, were you witnesses when death approached Ya'qũb, when he said to his sons: "What will you worship after me?" They said: "We will worship your God and the God of your fathers, Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl and Isḥãq, one God only, and to Him do we submit"* (133).

This is a people that have passed away; they shall have what they earned and you shall have what you earn, and you shall not be called upon to answer for what they did (134).

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COMMENTARY

QUR'ÃN: *And who turns away from the religion of Ibrãhīm but he who makes himself a fool: "ar-Raghbah"* (اَلرَّغْبَةُ) followed by the preposition *'an* (عَنْ = away from; off) means "to turn away", "to dislike"; when followed by *fī* (فِيْ = in), it denotes "to incline towards", "to desire". The verb, *safiha* (سَفِهَ = made a fool; became a fool) is used both as transitive and intransitive. Some exegetes have taken this word here as a transitive verb – according to them, the word *nafsahu* (نَفْسَهُ = himself; his self) is its object; others have taken the verb in the intransitive sense and in that case *nafsahu* will be *at-tamyīz* (اَلتَّمْيِيزُ = a specification), not an object. In any case, the meaning will remain the same: Whoever turns away from the religion of Ibrãhīm is a fool; he does not recognize what is beneficial to him from that which is harmful. From this verse we may infer what we have been told in the *ḥadīth:* "Surely wisdom is that by which the Beneficient (God) is worshipped."

QUR'ÃN: *and most certainly We chose him in this world: "al-Iṣṭifã' "* (اَلإِصْطِفَاءُ) means to choose, to separate best parts of a thing from other parts (if they were mixed together). Looking at the positions of *al-wilãyah* (الوَلاَيَةُ = love of Allãh), this choosing, this selection fits the sincerity of servitude. A person so chosen behaves in all his affairs as a sincere slave and servant, totally surrendering himself to his Lord. In other words, religion is embodied in all his affairs. After all, what is religion if not total servitude to Allãh in all matters whether of this world or of the hereafter, accepting gladly whatever the Lord decides for His servant in any given situation, as He says: *Surely the religion with Allãh is Islam* (3:19). Clearly it shows that the position

of "selection" is not different from that of "Islam", that is, surrender. As a further proof, look at the next verse: "When his Lord said to him, Submit (yourself) he said: 'I submit my-self to the Lord of the worlds' ". Obviously, the adverb "when" is related to the preceding verb "We chose him". It means that Ibrãhīm was chosen when his Lord said to him to submit and he responded by submitting himself to Allãh, the Lord of the worlds. In other words, the verse 131 (*When his Lord said to him, Submit, he said. "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds",*) *is* like an explanation of the words, "most surely We chose him".

In these verses pronouns have been changed from the first person to the third, and again from the second to the third. After saying, "We chose him", it would have been more usual to say: "When We said to him"; but Allãh says, "When his Lord said to him, Submit (yourself)"; then in reply, Ibrãhīm (a.s.) should have said: "I submit myself to Thee"; instead he said: "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds". The reason is a follows:

"When his Lord said to him": It points to the fact that the talk was a secret between Ibrãhīm and his Lord, at a level where there was no one else to listen to that confidential conversation. Had Allãh said, "When We said to him", it would have implied that the hearers of this verse were present at that sublime station and could be addressed to by Allãh – after all, the audience has a direct relationship with the speaker. Therefore, Allãh referred to Himself in the third person, cutting the connection between Himself and the hearers of the verse, showing that at the level where He spoke with Ibrãhīm, no one else was present; the conversation between Allãh and Ibrãhīm was a confidential matter veiled in secrecy. In short, it was a talk between two close friends which others were excluded from.

"I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds". As mentioned above, the preceding phrase shows that Allãh bestowed His grace exclusively on Ibrãhīm and enhanced his rank by this friendly confidential conversation. But Ibrãhīm knew how to speak in Divine presence; he was a servant of Allãh; he should not forget the dictates of humility; it was a sign of his excellence, of his humbleness, that he did not start talking with Allãh in a friendly

way, did not consider himself as worthy of that exclusive proximity, of that sublime friendship. He continued to see in himself a humble and powerless servant who is sustained by his Master's grace. That is why he submitted to the Lord to Whom all the worlds surrender, and said: "I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds".

"al-Islãm" (اَلإِسْلاَمُ), *"at-taslīm"* (اَلتَّسْلِيمُ) and *"al-istislãm* (اَلإِسْتِسْلاَمُ), all are from the same root *s-l-m* (س-ل-م) and have the same meaning, that is, to submit, to surrender. These verbs are used when a man or a thing submits to another thing, in such a way that the first never disobeys the second, never goes against it. Allãh says: *Yes! whoever submits himself entirely to Allãh..* . (2:112); *Surely I have turned my face, being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth. . .* (6:79). It is with the face that one turns towards someone. So far as Allãh is concerned, the whole being, the whole existence, of the thing turns to Him. When a man surrenders to Allãh, he obeys and accepts whatever comes to him from Allãh – the creative matters like the measure and the decree, as well as the legislative ones like order and prohibition.

As men differ in degrees of their submission to Divine Decrees or legislations, so does their Islam.

The first stage of Islam is to accept and obey the exoteric commandments, orders and prohibitions, by reciting *ash-shahãda-tayn* (اَلشَّهَادَتَيْنِ) = the two testimonies, that is, testifying to the Oneness of God and Messengership of Muhammad, (s.a.w.a.), no matter whether the belief has entered into the heart or not. Allãh says: *The dwellers of the desert say: "We believe". Say: "You do not believe but say, 'We submit'; and faith has not yet entered into your hearts". . .* (49:14)

This Islam is followed by the first stage of *al-īmãn* (اَلإِيْمَانُ) = faith, belief); and that is the sincere belief in the above-menioned *shahãdatayn*; such a believer faithfully obeys most of the rules of the sharī'ah.

This first stage of *al-īmãn* is followed by the second stage of Islam. It is the sincere acceptance of all true beliefs in detail, with its necessary concomitant, that is, good deeds – although

occasional slips are not impossible. Allãh says praising the pious ones: *Those who believed in Our signs and were submissive* (43: 69). Also, He says: *O you who believe! enter into submission one and all* (2:208). These verses show that there is an Islam which comes after *al-īmãn;* obviously this Islam is other than the previously mentioned one.

This Islam is followed by the second stage of *al-īmãn;* and it is the believing, with full details and reasoning, in the realities of the religion. Allãh says: *The believers are only those who believe in Allãh and His Messenger then they doubt not and struggle hard with their wealth and their lives in the way of Allãh; they are the truthful ones* (49:15). Again, He says: *O you who believe! shall I lead you to a merchandise which may deliver you from a painful chastisement? You shall believe in Allãh and His Messenger, and struggle hard in Allãh's way with your properties and your lives* (61:10-11). This verse directs the believers to believe; obviously the second *Īmãn* is other than the first one.

This second stage of *al-īmãn* paves the way for the third stage of Islam. When the soul is sufficiently imbued with the above-mentioned īmãn, and acquires its characteristics, then man's all animalistic and beastly faculties are subdued to the sublime powers of his intellect and spirituality. He keeps all his desires – pulling him to the material attractions and transient trinkets of this world – under firm control. Thereupon, he reaches a stage where he worships Allãh as though he was seeing Him – and if he was not seeing Allãh, then Allãh was seeing him. There is nothing in his hidden life and inner-self, that is not submissive to Allãh's orders and prohibitions; he is never annoyed with any decree or measure of Allãh. Allãh says: *But no! by your Lord! they do not believe until they make you a judge of that which has become a matter of disagreement among them, and then do not find any straitness in their selves as to what you have decided, and submit with total submission* (4:65).

This Islam is followed by the third stage of *al-īmãn.* Allãh says: *Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers and who keep aloof from what is vain..* . (23:1–3). It is this stage that the words of Allãh refer to: "When his Lord

said to him, Submit (yourself), he said: 'I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds.' "

Sometimes the second and the third stages are counted as one. The sublime virtues, for example, being pleased with Divine Decree, submitting to the commands of Allãh, forbearance and patience for the love of Allãh, self-denial, piety, and love and hate for the sake of Allãh are concomitants of this stage of *al-īmãn.*

The fourth stage of Islam follows the third stage of *al-īmãn.* In the above-mentioned stage of *al-īmãn* the condition of a man *vis-à-vis* his Lord is like that of a slave with his master when a slave faithfully follows the dictates of his bondage – when he totally surrenders to the will of his master and accepts his likes and dislikes. Obviously there is no comparison between the ownership and authority a master has over his slave and the ownership and authority the Lord of the worlds has over His creatures. His is the real possession, the real ownership; nothing else has any independent existence – neither in person or characteristics nor in actions.

Sometimes, when a man reaches the third stage of surrender and submission, the Divine Grace takes him under its wing; he is shown the reality, and sees with his heart's eyes that the Kingdom belongs to Allãh, nothing else owns anything at all – except when Allãh bestows it to someone; there is no Lord other than He.

This realization, this unveiling of reality, is a Divine Gift, a bestowal by Allãh, to whom He pleases; a man cannot reach this sublime stage by his own will or effort. Probably it is to this Islam that the prayer of Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl refers: *Our Lord! and make us both submissive to Thee and* (raise) *from our off-spring a group submissive to Thee, and show us our ways of devotion* . . . (2:128). Compare this to the verse: "When his Lord said to him, Submit (yourself), he said: 'I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds' ". Obviously the latter is a legislative, not a creative, order. Ibrãhīm was Muslim by his own will and choice, responding to the Divine Invitation, obeying the orders of Allãh. It was an order he received in his early life. Now the former verse shows him, in the twilight of his life, praying with

his son, Ismã‘īl, for Islam and for being shown their ways of devotion. Undoubtedly, he was asking for something which was not in his hand; or was praying to be kept firm on something which was not in his power. In short, the Islam, which Ibrãhīm and Ismã‘īl prayed for, was of this fourth and sublime stage.

This Islam is followed by the fourth stage of *al-īmãn.* It happens when the above-mentioned conditions permeates the believer's whole being, and submerges all his conditions and actions. Allãh says: *Now surely the friends of Allãh – they have no fear nor do they grieve; those who believed and were pious* (10:62 -63). The believers mentioned here must be having the certainty that nothing is independent of Allãh, and no "cause" has any causative power except by His permission. It is this certainty which insulates them from grief when a tragedy strikes them, and protects them from fear if a danger looms ahead. It is only because of this factor that they have been praised in these terms.

This īmãn comes after the above-mentioned Divine Gift of Islam. Ponder on this point.

QUR'ÃN: *and in the hereafter he is most surely among the good ones: "aṣ-Ṣalãḥ"* (اَلصَّلاَحُ) literally means: capability, ability. In the Divine Speech, this word and its derivatives, have been used sometimes for the man himself, and, at other times, for his actions and deeds. Allãh says: . . . *he should do good deeds.. .* (18:110); also, He says: *And marry those among you who are single and those who are good* (*i.e.,* fit) *among your male slaves and your female slaves. . .* (24:32)

No clear explanation is found in the Book of Allãh as to what constitutes goodness of deeds. But the Book attributes to it some effects, which may be helpful in understanding its meaning. For example:-

1. A good deed is good for the pleasure of Allãh: *And those who are patient, seeking the pleasure of their Lord. . .* (13:22); *and you do not spend but to seek Allãh's pleasure . . .* (2:272)
2. It is good for the reward of Allãh: *Allãh's reward is better for him who believes and does good. . .* (28:80)

3. It lifts up the good words which ascend to Allãh: *To Him do ascend the good words; and the good deed lifts them up . . .* (35:10)

These descriptions show that, so far as actions are concerned, a "good deed" means an action that is fit to receive honour from God, is capable of lifting the good words to Allãh. Allãh says: . . . *but to Him reaches the piety on your part . . .* (22:37)*; All do We aid – these as well as those – out of the bounty of your Lord; and the bounty of your Lord is not confined* (17:20).

As for the persons, the following verses show what constitutes their goodness: *And whoever obeys Allãh and the Messenger, these are with those upon whom Allãh has bestowed favours from among the prophets and the truthful and the martyrs and the good ones; and excellent are these as companions!* (*4:69*)*; And We caused them to enter into Our mercy; surely they were of the good ones* (21:86). Again Allãh quotes Sulaymãn (a.s.) as saying: . . . *and make me enter, by Thy mercy, into Thy servants, the good ones* (27:19). Also, He says: *And* (as for) *Lũṭ, We gave him wisdom and knowledge. . . and We took him into Our mercy; surely he was of the good ones* (21:74 – *75*). The mercy referred to in these verses is not the general Divine Mercy which encompasses everything; nor does it mean that mercy which is ordained for the pious believers, as Allãh says: . . . *and* My *mercy encompasses all things; so I will ordain it* (especially) *for those who are pious. . .* (7:156). The great personalities mentioned in the verses earlier referred to were "the good ones", and they were a selected group from among the pious believers; they were "fit" for the exclusive mercy mentioned in those verses. We know that some of the mercies of Allãh are reserved for some especial groups to the exclusion of others. Allãh says: *and Allãh chooses especially whom He pleases for His mercy* (2:105).

Also, this expression does not refer to the general honour of *al-wilãyah* in other words, it does not say that Allãh man-aged or manages their affairs for them. Of course, the good ones had that honour too; certainly they were among the honoured

al-awliyã' (الأَوْلِيَاءُ = friends of Allãh), as we have explained in the exegesis of the verse 1:5 (*Guide us to the straight path*)*;* but this *wilãyah* is an attribute which is also shared by the prophets, the truthful ones and the martyrs. If they had only this honour to their credit they could not be counted as a separate group distinguished from the other three.

So, what is the distinctive feature of the "goodness"? The answer is that Allãh takes a "good one" into His especial mercy and grants him comprehensive protection from chastisement. These two effects are mentioned in the Qur'ãn: *Then as to those who believed and did good, their Lord will make them enter into His mercy* (*i.e.,* into the Garden) (45:30) ; *They shall call therein* (*i.e.,* in the Garden) *every fruit in security* (44:55).

Now ponder on the following verses: *And We took him into Our mercy* (21:75) ; *and We made* (them) *all good ones* (21:72). Note how Allãh attributes these actions to Himself, not to the people concerned. Also look at the fact that according to the Divine declarations, reward is always given in lieu of actions and efforts. Keeping all this in view, you will realize that the "personal goodness" is a especial honour which cannot be earned as a reward of good deeds or by one's own will. Probably, it is to this reality that the verse refers: *They have therein what they wish and with Us is more yet* (50:35): Possibly, the first clause (*They have therein what they wish*) refers to the reward of their deeds; and the second one (*and with Us is more yet*) concerns what they shall be given not in lieu of action, but purely by Divine Mercy. We shall elaborate it, Allãh willing, in the exegesis of this verse.

Now look at the life of Ibrãhīm (a.s.). He was a prophet, a messenger of God, one of the *ulu 'l azm* prophets and an Imãm; many of the prophets and messengers coming after him were his followers; and he was of the good ones, as the words of Allãh clearly say: *and We made* (them) *all good ones* (21:72). This verse also shows that he was made, in this very world, one of the good ones. Consider also the fact that many prophets of lesser rank were made, in this very world, among the good ones. Then why does he pray to Allãh to join him to the good ones?

It is clear from this prayer that there was a group of the “good ones” who had gone ahead of him, and now he was praying to Allãh to join him to them. Allãh granted him his prayer “in the hereafter”, as is mentioned in the Qur’ãn in three places – one of which is the verse under discussion: *and most certainly We chose him in this world, and in the hereafter he is most surely among the good ones* (2:130). Other two verses are: . . . *and We gave him his reward in this world, and in the hereafter he is most surely among the good ones* (29:27). *And We gave him good in this world, and in the hereafter he will most surely be among the good* (16:122).

If you ponder on the foregoing details, you will know that “goodness” has many ranks, one above the other. Therefore you should not be astonished if you are told that Ibrãhīm (a.s.) had asked to be joined to Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and his purified progeny (a.s.), and that Allãh granted him his prayer in the here-after, not in this world. Ibrãhīm (a.s.) had prayed to Allãh to join him with the good ones, while Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) unambiguously claims this honour for himself: *Surely my guardian is Allãh, Who revealed the Book, and He takes in hand* (the affairs of) *the good ones* (7:196). It is obvious that Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) claims the *wilãyah* for himself. In other words, the Prophet, according to his claim mentioned in the verse, had already got the “goodness”; and Ibrãhīm (a.s.) was praying to be joined to a group of “good ones” who had already been given that rank, and that group was Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and his progeny.

QUR’ÃN: *And the same did Ibrãhīm enjoin on his sons:* that is, the same religion.

QUR’ÃN: . . . *therefore die not unless you are Muslims:* Death is something beyond one’s control; and *“at-taklīf”* (اَلتَّكْلِيْفُ = commandments of the *sharī‘ah*) covers only those things which are under one’s control. Then why did Ibrãhīm and Ya‘qūb (peace be on them!) tell their progeny not to die unless they were Muslims? The fact is that this admonition concerned a matter which was fully under their power. The real meaning is like this:

Beware lest the death comes to you and you are not Muslims; always remain Muslims; keep on Islam, so that whenever death comes to you, you are Muslims.

The verse gives a hint that the religion means Islam, as Allãh says: *Surely the religion with Allãh is Islam* (3:19).

QUR'ÃN: *"We will worship your God and the God of your fathers, Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl and Isḥãq":* The verse uses the word "father" for the grandfather, the uncle and the father – and it has been used without any reason of *"at-taghlib"* (اَلتَّغْلِيْبُ) that is, all groups are equal in number; there were not more "fathers" than the grandfather and the uncle to justify the use of this word for the whole group. It proves that the word "father" may correctly be used for uncle, as we shall show, Allãh willing, that Ibrãhīm (a.s.) addressed his uncle Ãzar, as "father".

QUR'ÃN: *"one God only":* This sums up the preceding detailed description, "your God and the God of your fathers . . ."; it serves to remove any possible misunderstanding that his God was other than the God of his fathers – as the idol-worshippers thought that there were many gods. '

QUR'ÃN: *"and to Him do we submit";* It refers to the subject of their talk, that is, worship. They made it clear that their worship of Allãh would be totally in accordance with the dictates of Islam. The reply shows that the religion of Ibrãhīm was Islam. Accordingly, the religion which was inherited by his offspring, for example, Isḥãq, Ya'qũb and Ismã'īl, and which continued in the Children of Israel and Ismã'īl, was Islam, and nothing else. It was this religion which Ibrãhīm (a.s.) brought from his Lord; and nobody had any right to turn away from it or to call to any other religion.

TRADITIONS

Samã'ah narrates from aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) that he said: "The position of īmãn (faith) *vis-à-vis* Islam is like that of the Sacred

Ka'bah *vis-à-vis* the Sanctuary; sometimes one may be in the Sanctuary without being in the Ka'bah, but he cannot be in the Ka'bah without being in the Sanctuary." (*al-Kãfī*)

Also he narrates from the same Imãm that he said: "Islam is to bear witness that there is no god except Allãh, and to accept the truth of the Messenger of Allãh; it is by this that the bloods are spared (i.e., lives are protected) and marriages and inheritance are validated; and the multitude of people are on its apparent (meaning); and the īmãn (*i.e.,* faith and belief) is the guidance, and (it is) that characteristic of Islam which is firmly placed in the hearts." (*ibid.*)

The author says: There are other traditions of the same meaning; and they explain the above-mentioned first stage of the Islam and īmãn.

al-Barqi has narrated from 'Ali (a.s.) that he said: "Islam is submission and submission is conviction." (*ibid.*)

Kahil said that aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said: "If a people worshipped Allãh – the One, there is no partner to Him – and established prayer, and paid the *zakãt* and did the *ḥajj* of the House, and kept the fast of the month of *Ramadan,* and then said about-something done by Allãh or done by the Messenger of Allãh, 'Why did he not do it in another way?', or (even if) they felt (like) it in their hearts, they would become polytheists because of it . . ." (*ibid.*)

The author says: The foregoing two traditions refer to the third stages of the Islam and īmãn.

ad-Daylami narrates in his *al-Irshãd* – and he gives two *sanads* for this *ḥadīth* which is one of the traditions of Ascension – that Allãh said: " O Ahmad! Do you know which way of living is happier and which life more durable?" (The Messenger of Allãh) said: "No, O Allãh!" (He) said: "As for the happy way of living, it is that in which the (living) person is not tired of remembering Me, and does not forget My bounties, and does not ignore My rights (on him); he seeks My pleasure day and night.

And as for the ever-lasting life, it is (realized) when (the person) works for his (spiritual) benefit until the world looses its significance for him, and looks small in his eyes; and the hereafter becomes great for him; and he gives preference to My pleasure over his own desire, and seeks My pleasures, and thinks the right of My bounty (as) great (on him) ; and keeps in mind what I have done for him (i.e., for his benefit); and watches Me day and night whenever he is tempted to commit any wrong or sin; and keeps his heart clean from all that I dislike; and hates Satan and his whisperings, and does not let Satan establish a hold over, or a passage to, his heart. When he acts (like) this, then I put (My) love into his heart until I make his heart, as well as his leisure and engagement, and his thought and speech, a part of (My) favours which I have bestowed on those of My creatures who love Me; and I open his heart's eye and ear, so that he hears with his heart, and looks with his heart to My Majesty and Greatness; and I make the world straitened for him; and make him hate it with all its pleasures; and I caution him of the world and all that it contains, as a shepherd protects his sheep from dangerous pasture lands. When it happens, then he flees from people, and transfers from the house of termination to the abode of eternity, and from the house of Satan to the seat of the Beneficent (God), O Aḥmad ! and I adorn him with dignity and majesty. So, this is the good way of living and the eternal life; and it is the station of those who are pleased (with Me). So, whoever acts for My pleasure, I give him three characteristics: I teach him gratitude which is not polluted by ignorance, and remembrance that is not adulterated with forgetfulness, and love – so that he does not prefer the love of creatures to My love. Then when he loves Me, I love him, and I open the eye of his heart to My Majesty, and do not keep My (very) special creatures hidden from him. And I converse with him secretly in the dark of night and the light of day, until he ceases talking with the creatures and sitting with them; and I make him hear My talk and the speech of My angels; and I make My secret known to him – which I have kept hidden from (all) My creation. And I dress him in modesty, until all the creation is awed of him. And he walks

on the earth (and all his sins are) forgiven. And I make his heart hearing and seeing ; and do not hide from him anything of the Garden or the Fire; and I make known to him what terror and affliction are going to happen to the people on the Day of Resurrection, and the things I will question the rich and the poor, as well as the learned and the ignorant, about. And I will make him sleep (in peace) in his grave, and I will send Munkar and Nakīr to him for questioning him; and he will not see the sorrow of death, nor the fright of the prelude (of the next world). Then I will erect his weighing scale for him, and will unroll his book (of deeds), then I will put his books in his right hand, and he shall read it unfolded; then I will not keep any interpreter between Me and him. So these are the attributes of the lovers. O Ahmad ! make your concern one concern, and make your tongue one tongue, and make your body (i.e., your person) alive that is never oblivious (of Me). Whoever is oblivious of Me, I do not care in which valley he perishes." (*Biḥãru 'l-anwãr*)

al-Majlisī quotes the following tradition from *al-Kãfī, Ma'ãni 'l-akhbãr* and *an Nawãdir* of ar-Rãwandi, with various chains of narrators, from aṣ-Ṣãdiq and al-Kãẓim (a.s.) – and the text given here is from *al-Kãfī* – that the Imãm said: "The Messenger of Allãh met Ḥãrithah ibn Mãlik ibn an-Nu'mãn al-Anṣãrī, and said to him: 'How are you? O Ḥãrithah ibn Mãlik an-Nu'mãnī!' He said: 'A believer in reality, O Messenger of Allãh!' The Messenger of Allãh then said to him: 'There is a reality for everything ; so what is the reality of your word?' He said: 'O Messenger of Allãh! I turned myself away from the world, so I kept my night awake (in worship) and my days thirsty (in fast) ; and (it is) as though I am looking at the throne of my Lord which has been set up for (taking) the (people's) account; and as though I see the people of the Garden visiting one another in the Garden, and as if I hear the howling of the people of the Fire in the Fire.' Thereupon, the Messenger of Allãh (s.a.w.a.) said: 'A servant that Allãh has enlightened his heart. You have seen, so be firm.'" (*ibid.*)

The author says: The two traditions describe the fourth stage of the Islam and īmãn mentioned above. There are many traditions

explaining particulars of these two; and, Allãh willing, we shall quote some of them in various places of this book; and they are supported by the Qur'ãnic verses.

Also it should be kept in mind that for each stage of the Islam and īmãn, there is an opposite stage of *al-kufr* (اَلْكُفْرُ = disbelief) and *ash-shirk* (اَلشِّرْكُ = polytheism). And it is known that the higher and subtler the meaning of the Islam and īmãn, the more difficult it is to protect oneself from its opposite *kufr* or *shirk.*

Obviously, a lower stage of the Islam or īmãn does not exclude the possibility of a subtler *kufr* or *shirk.*

These two principles should be kept in mind. It follows that the verses of the Qur'ãn have some esoteric meanings which are applied to the situations which its exoteric meanings cannot be applied to. Please keep this hint in mind until we explain to you its details.

al-Qummi writes about the words of Allãh, *and with Us is more,* that the Imãm said: "Looking towards the mercy of Allãh." (*at-Tafsīr*)

The Prophet said: "Allãh says: 'I have prepared for My good servants that which no eye has ever seen, nor any ear ever heard, nor has it ever passed from the heart of any man.' " (*Majma'u 'l-bayãn*)

The author says: The meaning of the two traditions may easily be understood from what we have written about the meaning of "good ones"; and Allãh is the Guide.

al-Bãqir (a.s.) said about the words of Allãh, *Or, were you witnesses when death approached Ya'qũb . . .:* "It is applied to *al-Qa'im* (اَلْقَآئِمُ = the one who stands – i.e., with sword to establish the way of Allãh). (al 'Ayyãshī)

The author says: The author of *aṣ-Ṣãfī* writes: "Perhaps the Imãm meant that it was about the Qã'im from the progeny of Muhammad, because every Qa'im of them asks his children the same question at the time of his death, and they reply him as the children of Ya'qũb had replied."

وقالوا كونوا هودا أو نصارى تهتدوا قل بل ملة إبراهيم حنيفا
وما كان من المشركين ــ ١٣٥ . قولوا آمنا بالله وما أنزل إلينا
وما أنزل إلى إبراهيم وإسمعيل وإسحق ويعقوب والأسباط وما
أوتي موسى وعيسى وما أوتي النبيون من ربهم لا نفرق بين أحد
منهم ونحن له مسلمون ــ ١٣٦ . فإن آمنوا بمثل ما آمنتم به فقد
اهتدوا وإن تولوا فإنما هم في شقاق فسيكفيكهم الله وهو السميع
العليم ــ ١٣٧ . صبغة الله ومن أحسن من الله صبغة ونحن له
عابدون ــ ١٣٨ . قل أتحاجوننا في الله وهو ربنا وربكم ولنا
أعمالنا ولكم أعمالكم ونحن له مخلصون ــ ١٣٩ . أم تقولون إن
إبراهيم وإسمعيل وإسحق ويعقوب والأسباط كانوا هودا أو نصارى
قل أأنتم أعلم أم الله ومن أظلم ممن كتم شهادة عنده من الله وما
الله بغافل عما تعملون ـ ١٤٠ . تلك أمة قد خلت لها ما كسبت
ولكم ما كسبتم ولا تسألون عما كانوا يعملون ـ ١٤١ .

And they say: ‘Be Jews or Christians, you will be rightly guided” Say: “Nay! (we follow) *the religion of Ibrãhīm, the upright one, and he was not of the polytheist”* (135).

Say: "We believe in Allãh and (in) *that which has been revealed to us, and* (in) *that which was revealed to Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl and Isḥãq and Ya'qũb and the tribes, and* (in) *that which was given to Mũsã and Isa, and* (in) *that which was given to the prophets from their Lord, we do not make any distinction between any of them, and to Him do we submit"* (136). *If then they believe in like of what you believe in, they are indeed on the right course, and if they turn back, then they are only in great dissension; so Allãh will suffice you against them, and He is the Hearing, the Knowing* (137). (We have received) *the dyeing of Allãh, and who is better than Allãh in dyeing? and Him do we worship* (138). *Say: "Do you dispute with us about Allãh? and He is our Lord and your Lord; and for us our deeds and for you are your deeds; and we are sincere to Him* (139). *Or, do you say that Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl and Ya'qiib and the tribes were Jews or Christians?" Say: "Are you better knowing or Allãh? And who is more unjust than he who conceals a testimony that he has from Allãh? And Allãh is not at all heedless of what you do"* (140). *This is a people that have passed away; they shall have what they earned and you shall have what you earn, and you shall not be called upon to answer for what they did* (141).

* * * * *

COMMENTARY

QUR'ÃN: *And they say: "Be Jews and Christians, you will be rightly guided":* The preceding verses made it clear that the true religion followed by the children of Ibrãhīm – Ismã'īl and Isḥãq as well as Ya'qũb and his descendants – was the same Islam which was the religion of Ibrãhīm, the upright one. It means that the differences and divisions, the schisms and sects, which the proponents of Judaism and Christianity call to, have actually originated from their own desires; they are just a few toys manufactured by them. They are in great disputations, schisms and

disagreements, they are divided into numerous sects and religious groups, they have dyed the religion of Allãh – the religion of Unity, the religion of Oneness – with colours of their bias and prejudice, their desires and ambitions. But the religion is not divided; it is one, in the same way as God, Who is to be worshipped, is One; it is the religion of Ibrãhīm; the Muslims should firmly keep hold of this original religion, discarding the differences and dissensions of the People of the Book aside.

Although the life in this world looks like a constant phenomenon, in reality it is continuously changing. The same applies to all the natural world. Even the rites, customs and manners of various nations and groups are not immune from this propensity to change. More often than not, it causes changes and deviations even in religious matters. Sometimes extraneous things are inserted in religion; at other times, an essential part is declared anathema; worldly goals and ideals replace the Divine and religious goals and aims. What a tragedy is it for religion! When it happens, the religion is dyed in national or tribal colour, and starts calling to a goal other than the original one; it focuses its sight on innovations, forgetting its original purpose. In a short while, the evil (i.e., the innovation) becomes virtue. People support and defend it, because it agrees with their desires and cravings. And the virtue is treated as evil; it has no protector or defender to stand for it. Ultimately, the things deteriorate to unbelievable extent, as we are seeing with our own eyes today.

However, the sentence: "And they say : 'Be Jews or Christians' ", stands for the sentences, "The Jews say: 'Be Jews, you will be guided aright' ; and the Christians say: 'Be Christians, you will be rightly guided.' " They make such divergent claims because of their divergences and differences.

QUR'ÃN: *Say: "Nay!* (we follow) *the religion of Ibrãhīm, the upright one, and he was not of the polytheists":* It is the reply of their claims. The Prophet should tell them: Nay! we follow the religion of Ibrãhīm, the upright one; because it is the one religion which was followed by all your prophets – Ibrãhīm and all those who came after him. Ibrãhīm, who brought this religion,

was not a polytheist. Had there been so many divisions in his religion – the divisions which were attached to it by the innovators – he would have become a polytheist: That which is not a part of Allãh's religion cannot invite towards Allãh, it will surely call to something other than Allãh – and this is what polytheism means. The religion of Ibrãhīm is the religion of unity; it does not contain anything that is not from Allãh.

QUR'ÃN: *Say: "We believe in Allãh and* (in) *that which has been revealed to us, and* (in) *that which was revealed to Ibrãhīm . . .":* After mentioning the claim of the Jews and the Christians, Allãh describes the truth – and He always tells the truth. The truth consists of the testimony of belief in One God and belief in all that was brought by the prophets – without making any distinction between them. This is what is called the Islam. Belief in Allãh was the fundamental part of that which was revealed to the prophets; yet it has been mentioned here separately. The reason is that the belief in the Creator is a natural instinct, it does not depend on prophetic proofs and arguments.

After that fundamental belief, Allãh mentions "that which has been revealed to us", that is, the Qur'ãn or the knowledge contained in it. Then He mentions "that which was revealed to Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl and Isḥãq and Ya'qũb". Thereafter is described "that which was given to Mũsã and 'Isã"; these two have been especially mentioned because the speech is addressed to the Jews and the Christians who call only to these two prophets, respectively. Finally the testimony includes "that which was given to the prophets". This sentence covers all the prophets and thus paves the way for the next declaration: "we do not make any distinction between any of them".

Note the variation in style: That which is with us and that which was with Ibrãhīm, Ismã'īl, Isḥãq and Ya'qũb, is listed as "revealed" to us and them, respectively; while that which was with Musa, 'Isã and other prophets is referred to as "given" to them.

Probably the reason is this: The basic idea may be conveyed by the word, "giving", as Allãh says after mentioning Ibrãhīm and other prophets who came before or after him: *These are they to*

whom We gave the book and the wisdom and the prophethood (6:89). But this word does not clearly and necessarily mean "revelation"; for example, Allãh says: *And certainly We gave wisdom to Luqmãn* (31:12) ; *And certainly We gave the book and the wisdom and the prophecy to the Children of Israel. . .* (45 :16). Now both the Jews and the Christians counted Ibrãhīm, Ismã'īl, Isḥãq, Ya'qũb and the tribes as following their religions respectively – the Jews claimed that those prophets were Jews; the Christians claimed that they were Christians. They believed that the true religion was the Judaism or the Christianity that was given to Mũsã or 'Isã respectively. In this background, if Allãh had said, 'that which was given to Ibrãhīm. . ., it would not have clearly shown that those prophets themselves had brought a religion, which was revealed to them by Allãh; the Jews or the Christians could have claimed that what was given to them was the same thing which was given to Mũsã or 'Isã – peace be on them all – and that their names have been mentioned, like that of the Children of Israel, just because they followed the self-same religion! It was to remove this possible misunderstanding that Ibrãhīm and those named prophets (peace be on them all) were separately mentioned and it was clearly said that they had got that religion by Divine revelation. As for the prophets who came before Ibrãhīm (a.s.), the Jews and the Christians did not lay claim on their religion, and there was no chance of any misunderstanding; therefore, their religion was referred to as "given" to them.

QUR'ÃN: *and the tribes: 'al-Asbãṭ"* (اَلأَسْبَاط) of the Israelites has the same meaning as *"al-qabã'il"* (اَلقَبَائِلُ) of the Ismã'īlites, and that is, the tribes. *Ṣibṭ,* like *qabīlah,* refers to the descendants of one forefathers. There were twelve tribes in the Israelites, each one descended from one of the twelve children of Ya'qũb; thus each became a distinct group in itself.

If the word "tribes" refers to the whole groups, then it is used metaphorically, because the prophets who received the revelation were from those tribes. On the other hand, it may

refer to the individuals, that is, the prophets themselves. In any case, it does not include the brothers of Yusuf (a.s.) because they were not prophets.

A similar verse is found in the Chapter of 'The Women' : *and We revealed to Ibrãhīm and Ismã'īl and Isḥãq and Ya'qũb and the tribes, and 'Īsã and Ayyũb and Yũnus and Hãrũn and Sulaymãn . . .* (4:163).

QUR'ÃN: *If then they believe in like of what you believe in, they are indeed on the right course:* What Allãh actually means is this: If they believe in what you believe in, then they are on the right course. But He has added here the word "like" (*If then they believe in like of what you believe in* . . .), to cut the root of disputation and argumentation. Had they been invited to believe hi what the Muslims believed in, they could have replied – as they used to say – No, we believe in that which has been revealed to us and we reject what is besides that. Therefore, this verse teaches the Muslims a different way of expressions: We believe in that which contains nothing but pristine truth; therefore, you too should believe in that which contains only pristine truth like it. Addressed in this way, they will not find any loop-hole, nor will they be able to resort to their obstinate wrangles. And then they will realize that what they have had is not the unadulterated truth.

QUR'ÃN: *in great dissension: "ash-Shiqãq"* (اَلشِّقَاقُ) means hypocricy, disputation, dissension.

QUR'ÃN: *so Allãh will suffice you against them:* It was a promise to the Messenger of Allãh to help him against them; and Allãh fulfilled this promise. And the same favour shall be completed for the Muslim nation when Allãh wills.

This verse is a parenthetic statement between the preceding and the following verses.

QUR'ÃN: *the dyeing of Allãh, and who is better than Allãh in dyeing?: "aṣ-Ṣibghah"* (اَلصِّبْغَة) means a kind of dyeing. The verse means: The above-mentioned belief is a Divine colour in

which Allãh has dyed us; and it is the best of the colours – it is not a dye of the Judaism nor of the Christianity, which emanate from dissensions in religion, when people fail to keep on the right track.

QUR'ÃN: *and Him do we worship:* Grammatically the sentence describes the condition; it gives the reason of the preceding phrase: "the dyeing of Allãh . . ."

QUR'ÃN: *Say: "Do you dispute with us about Allãh?":* It is a rebuke to the People of the Book regarding their disputation with the Muslims. The next sentences show how and why their argumentations were wrong and in vain: "and He is our Lord and your Lord; and for us are our deeds and for you are your deeds; and we are sincere to Him". When the followers dispute with each other concerning their leader, the dispute may emanate from one or more of the three causes:

First: They follow different leaders; and each wants to show the superiority of his leader over the other's, for example, a dispute between an idol-worshipper and a Muslim.

Second: They follow the same leader, but each claims a close relationship with the leader, denying a like privilege to the other.

Third: One party wants to show that the other party, because of his unbecoming behaviour and immoral character, has lost the right to be counted among the followers of the leader; his claim of being a follower of the leader is an insult to the latter.

Now, why should the Muslims and the People of the Book dispute with each other? The first reason does not apply, because both worship the same God. The same goes for the second reason, because one group's deeds do not clash with those of the other – "for us are our deeds and for you are your deeds". Coming to the third cause, the Muslims are sincere in their devotion to Allãh. So why should the People of the Book dispute with them, when they have got no reason at all.

In this way, Allãh first rebuked them for their disputation with the Muslims, and then dismisses all three causes of disputation one by one.

QUR'ÃN: *"Or, do you say that Ibrãhīm . . . were Jews or Christians?"*: Both groups say that Ibrãhīm and the other prophets named in the verse were from them; implying that they were Jews or Christians. Or, they clearly claimed that they were Jews or Christians, as may be understood from the words of Allãh: *O People of the Book! why do you dispute about Ibrãhīm, when the Torah and the Injil were not revealed till after him? Do you not then understand?* (3:65)

QUR'ÃN: *Say: 'Are you better knowing or Allãh?":* Because Allãh has informed us and you in the Book that Mũsã and 'Isã and their books came after Ibrãhīm and the prophets mentioned in this verse.

QUR'ÃN: *"And who is more unjust than he who conceals a testimony that he has from Allãh?":* That is, he who conceals a testimony, a fact known to him, that Allãh has informed in His Books that the *sharī'ah* of Judaism and Christianity were sent after Ibrãhīm and the other named prophets. The "testimony", thus, refers to a fact known to one.

The verse may alternatively refer to him who conceals the testimony of Allãh that Ibrãhīm and those prophets had passed away long before the Torah and the Injil were revealed. In this case, the "testimony" would refer to giving evidence, to bearing witness.

But the first meaning is more appropriate in the context of this verse.

QUR'ÃN: *This is a people that has passed away. . .:* It will do you no good to dispute about other people as to which group they belonged to; nor will silence on this matter do you any harm. You must spend your time in those things which you will be asked about tomorrow.

This verse has been repeated here because the Jews and the Christians talked (and they still do) too much on this subject – which would be of no avail to them on the Day of Judgment; especially when they knew very well that Ibrãhīm had passed away long before Judaism and Christianity came into being.

In other contexts, discussion about the prophets and messengers is a very beneficial thing ; the Qur'ãn exhorts us to look into, and learn about, their teachings and their spiritual virtues; and it is with this aim that it repeatedly narrates their stories and orders us to meditate on them.

TRADITIONS

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said about the verse: *Say: Nay!* (we follow) *the religion of Ibrãhīm. . .:* "Verily, the upright religion is the Islam." (al- 'Ayyãshī)

al-Bãqir (a.s.) said: "The upright religion (of Ibrãhīm, a.s.) did not leave anything (unguided), so much so that it includes the trimming of the moustache, and cutting of nails, and circumcision." (*ibid.*)

"Allãh revealed the upright (religion) to Ibrãhīm, and it is cleanliness; and it is (made up of) ten (things), five (of them) in the head and (the other) five in the (rest of the) body. As for those which are in the head, they are: Trimming of the moustache, and letting the beard grow, and dressing the hair, and brushing the teeth, and (using) the tooth-pick; and as for those which are in the (rest of the) body, they are: removing the hair from the body, and circumcision, and cutting the nails, and the bath of *al - janabah* (*a:.* = the ritual uncleanliness resulting from sexual intercourse or ejaculation), and cleansing (the body) with water. And this is the pure upright (religion) which Ibrãhīm (a.s.) brought; it was never abrogated, nor will it ever be abrogated until the Day of Resurrection." (*at-Tafsīr,* al-Qummi)

The author says: Dressing the hair means to trim it and grow it. There are a lot of traditions of the same or similar meaning, narrated by both sects in their books.

al-Bãqir (a.s.) said about the words of Allãh: *Say: We believe in Allãh. . .:* "Allãh has meant Ali, and Fãṭimah, and al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn, in this verse; and after them it has continued in the Imãms . . ." (*al-Kãfī;* al-'Ayyãshī)

The author says: This theme may be inferred from the words, *and* (raise) *from our offspring a group submitting to Thee* (2:128), which were used in the invocation of Ibrãhīm (a.s.). There is no contradiction between this tradition and the fact that the verse is addressed to all the Muslims and obliges all of them to believe in the things mentioned therein; because the circle of such verses may be widened or shortened in different contexts, according to various stages of application – as we have explained with reference to various stages of the Islam and *īmãn.*

al-Qummi narrates in his *at-Tafsīr* from al-Bãqir or aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.), and aṣ-Ṣadũq narrates in *Ma'ãni 'l-akhbãr* from aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) that he said explaining the words of Allãh, *the dyeing of Allãh . . .:* "The dyeing is the Islam**."**

The author says: It is clear from the context of the verses.

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said: "(Allãh) dyed the believers with *alwilãyah* (اَلوِلايَـةُ = love and obedience of the Prophet and his *Ahlu '1-bayt*) in (i.e., at the time of) *al-mīthãq* (اَلمِيْثاقُ = the covenant taken from the souls)." (*al-Kãfī; Ma'ãni 'l-akhbãr*)

The author says: It refers to the esoteric meaning of this verse, as we shall explain later on; we shall then also explain the meaning of *al-wilãyah* and *al-mithaq,* Allãh willing.

* * * * *

سَيَقُولُ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَا وَلَّاهُمْ عَنْ قِبْلَتِهِمُ الَّتِي كَانُوا عَلَيْهَا
قُلْ لِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ـ ١٤٢ .
وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ
الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ
مَنْ يَتَّبِعُ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَىٰ عَقِبَيْهِ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا
عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ
لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ــ ١٤٣ . قَدْ نَرَىٰ تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ
قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ
فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ
الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ ــ ١٤٤ . وَلَئِنْ أَتَيْتَ
الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ بِكُلِّ آيَةٍ مَا تَبِعُوا قِبْلَتَكَ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِتَابِعٍ
قِبْلَتَهُمْ وَمَا بَعْضُهُمْ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَةَ بَعْضٍ وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ مِنْ
بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِنَّكَ إِذًا لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ــ ١٤٥ . الَّذِينَ
آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِنْهُمْ
لَيَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ــ ١٤٦ . الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ
مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ ــ ١٤٧ . وَلِكُلٍّ وِجْهَةٌ هُوَ مُوَلِّيهَا فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ

أَيْنَمَا تَكُونُوا يَأْتِ بِكُمُ اللهُ جَمِيعاً إِنَّ اللهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ
ـ ١٤٨ . وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ
وَإِنَّهُ لَلْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَمَا اللهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ـ ١٤٩ . وَمِنْ
حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ
فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَيْكُمْ حُجَّةٌ إِلَّا
الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِي وَلِأُتِمَّ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ
تَهْتَدُونَ ـ ١٥٠ . كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولاً مِنْكُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ
آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمْ مَا لَمْ
تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ ـ ١٥١ .

The fools among the people will say: "What has turned them from their qiblah which they had?" Say: "The East and the West belong only to Allãh; He guides him whom He likes to a straight path" (142). *And thus We have made you a medium nation so that you may be witnesses for the people and the Messenger may be a witness for you. And We had not made the qiblah which you had but that We might know him who follows the Messenger from him who turns back upon his heels; and though this was surely hard except for those whom Allãh has guided aright; and Allãh was not going to make your faith to be fruitless; most surely Allãh is Affectionate, Merciful to the people* (143). *Indeed We see the turning of thy face to heaven, so We shall surely turn thee to a qiblah which thou shalt be pleased with; turn then thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are, turn your faces towards it; and those who have been given the Book most surely know that it is the truth from their Lord; and Allãh is not at all heedless of what they do* (144). *And even if you bring to those who have been given the Book every sign they would not follow your qiblah, nor can you be a*

follower of their qiblah, neither are they the followers of each other's qiblah; and if you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, then you shall most surely be among the unjust (145). *Those whom We have given the Book recognize him as they recognize their sons; and a party of them most surely conceal the truth while they know* (it) (146). *The truth is from your Lord, therefore you should not be of the doubters* (147). *And every one has a direction to which he would turn; therefore, hasten to* (do) *good works; wherever you are, Allãh will bring you all together; surely Allãh has power over all things* (148). *And from whatsoever place you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque; and surely it is the very truth from your Lord, and Allãh is not at all heedless of what you do* (149). *And from whatsoever place you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are turn your faces towards it, so that people shall have no argument against you, except such of them as are unjust; so do not fear them, and fear Me*; *and so that I may complete* My *favour on you and that you may walk on the right course* (150). *Even as We have sent among you a Messenger from among you who recites to you Our communications and purifies you and teaches you the Book and the wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know* (151).

* * * * *

COMMENTARY

Ponder on these verses and you will find them well-connected with each other, a common context joining them together like a strand running through the beads. These verses together talk about the appointment of the Ka'bah as the *qiblah* (the direction of prayer etc.) for the Muslims. Therefore, no attention should be paid to those who say that there was a change

of sequence in the arrangement of these verses, or that some of them have abrogated the others. Although they narrate some traditions to this effect, but they do not deserve any comment because all of them go against the clear meaning of these verses.

QUR'ÃN: *The fools among the people will say: "What has turned them from their qiblah which they had?":* It is the second introductory sentence for the soon-to-be-promulgated order to make the Ka'bah as the *qiblah* of the Muslims. Also, it teaches the reply of the objection which the "fools among the people", that is, the Jews and the pagans of Mecca, were expected to raise: The Jews because of their partisanship of their own *qiblah,* Baytu '1-Maqdis; and the pagan Arabs because they were always on the look out for any new thing which they could object to.

Allãh prepared the minds for change of *qiblah,* first by revealing the story of Ibrãhīm (a.s.) and various honours be-stowed on him by Allãh, as well as the honour accorded to his son, Ismã'īl; their prayers for the Ka'bah and Mecca, as well as for the Prophet and the Muslim group; their construction of the House and the order they received to cleanse it for the worship of Allãh.

It is recognized that the change of *qiblah* from Baytu '1-Maqdis to the Ka'bah was an event of greatest religious significance, one of the most important commandments given to the Muslims after the *hijrah* of the Prophet to Medina, when the roots of Islam were firmly taking place and its knowledge and realities were being spread. Understandably, the Jews were not going to remain silent in face of this legislation: According to their thinking this change negated one of their greatest religious prides, that is, *qiblah;* hitherto the Muslims were following them in their *qiblah,* and the Jews could claim a precedence over the Muslims in this religious symbol. Moreover, this new legislation was a manifest advancement in the Muslims' religion – it made all of them to face a single point in their worship and other religious rites. It saved them from looking towards divergent directions – physically; and from difference of opinions – spiritually. Facing towards the Ka'bah had rather more influence and deeper impression on the souls of

the Muslims than the rules of cleanliness and invocation etc.; and their enemies, and particularly the Jews, understood it, and they resented it. Their stories, as narrated in the Qur'ãn, prove that they were a nation which did not give any credence to anything in this world which was beyond the reach of the five senses. As spiritual things were not of any importance in their eyes, they used to accept the spiritual rules without any protest – they did not consider it worth arguing about. But whenever they were given a Divine Commandment which had any connection with the physical world, which had a material form – like war, emigration, *sajdah,* polite speech etc. – they stood up against it, and opposed it very vehemently.

In short, Allãh informed His Messenger what the enemies of Islam were going to say against the change of *qiblah,* and taught him how they should be replied, how their arguments should be refuted.

Their objection: The first *qiblah* was prescribed by Allãh for the previous prophets. Why was it changed to another House which had no such distinction? Was this change affected by the order of Allãh? How could Allãh contravene His Own previously ordained rule, or abrogate His Own law? (We have mentioned under the verse of "Abrogation" that the Jews do not believe in abrogation.) Or, was it done without any order from Allãh? If so, then the Muslims have deviated from the right path and have left guidance for misguidance. (This objection has not been mentioned in so many words in the Qur'ãn, but the suggested reply points to it.)

Reply: When Allãh prescribes a house like the Ka'bah as *qiblah,* it is not based on any specialty of that house or stone; there is no unalterable and inseparable quality in that building which could demand that honour as a right. Being chosen as a *qiblah is* not an inviolable and natural characteristic of any building. Every article, every building and every direction is equally capable of being selected for this purpose; and none has any especial claim for it. Everything belongs to Allãh, He issues orders about it, whatever He likes, in any way He likes, and whenever He likes.

Whatever He decrees, it is for the guidance of the people, for their individual and collective good and perfection. He does not order but for guidance, and He does not guide except to the way which leads directly to their perfection and well-being.

QUR'ÃN: *The fools among the people will say:* It means the Jews and the polytheists of Arabia; and that is why they have been referred to as "the people". They have been called "fools" because their mentality was not right, and their ideas about the Divine Law were unsound. And that is what foolishness is: crookedness of mind and unsoundness of opinion.

QUR'ÃN: *What has turned them . . . .* When the verb, *"at-tawliyah"* (اَلتَّوْلِيَةُ) is joined to its object (without preposition), it means, to turn your face towards that thing, to keep it facing you; as Allãh says: "so We shall surely turn thee to *a qiblah* which thou shalt like". When it is followed by the preposition '*an* (عَنْ), it gives the opposite meaning, that is, to turn away from, to turn one's face from. The verse means: What has turned them away, or turned their faces, from the *qiblah* which they were using hitherto, that is, Baytu 'l-Maqdis towards which the Prophet and the Muslims used to pray during his stay at Mecca and for a few months after his emigration to Medina.

QUR'ÃN: *from their qiblah:* The *qiblah is* attributed to the Muslims, although the Jews were using it centuries before the Prophet. Obviously, their turning from their own *qiblah* looks more surprising, and gives more room for objection.

And it was for the same reason that the opening phrase says: "What has turned them", instead of saying, "What has turned the Prophet and the Muslims." It would not have looked objectionable in the least if they had said: "What has turned the Prophet and the Muslims from the *qiblah* of the Jews?"

QUR'ÃN: *Say: "The East and the West belong only to Allãh":* Only these two directions were mentioned, because it is through them that all other cardinal and compound directions are fixed,

like the North, the South and all the intermediate directions between any two cardinal ones. The East and the West are relative directions which are fixed by the rising and setting of the sun and the stars; they cover all places of the earth (except two imaginary points of the true North and South Poles). Perhaps, it was for this reason that only these two were chosen to represent all the directions.

QUR'ÃN: *He guides him whom He likes to a straight path:* The word "*ṣirãt"* (صِرَاطٌ = path) is mentioned here without a definite article "*al"* (اَلْ), since it is a common noun, and does not specify a defmite path, because nations differ in their paths due to their differences in ability to attain perfection and happiness.

QUR'ÃN: *And thus We have made you a medium nation that you may be witnesses for the people and the Messenger may be a witness for you:* Apparently it means as follows: As We are going to change very soon the *qiblah* for you in order that We may guide you to a right path, in the same way We have made you an intermediary nation.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRESCRIPTION OF *QIBLAH* AND *UMMAH* BEINGWITNESSES FOR THE PEOPLE AND THE MESSENGER BEING WITNESS FOR THE *UMMAH*

Someone has explained it in the following way: And like this wonderful making, We have made you a medium nation. Such an explanation deserves no comment.

Another explanation given by another exegete is as follows:– They were made a "medium nation" to "be witnesses for the people". What does it mean? "Medium" is a thing in the centre, neither to this side nor to that. This "*ummah"* has the same position *vis-à-vis* "the people" – that is, the People of the Book and the polytheists. The polythesists and the dualist emphasize the physical aspects of life. Their whole attention is fixed to this worldly life; their plans are centred on its trinkets and

comforts. They do not believe in the Resurrection or the hereafter; spiritual perfection and esoteric virtues are not so important to them. On the other extreme are some groups, like the Christians, who put utmost emphasis on the spiritual aspects to the detriment of the physical ones. They teach monasticism and rejection of the world. They seem heedless to the fact that the Creator has made the physical perfection a means by which man may reach the goal for which he has been created. In short the latter – the "people of spirit" – nullified their goal by nullifying the means; and the former – the "people of body" – nullified their goal by focusing their whole attention to the means as though it was the goal in itself. Allãh has made this *ummah* a "medium", by giving them a religion which leads them to the straight and upright path, in the middle – inclined neither to this side nor to that. It strengthens both sides – the body as well as the soul – according to what each of them needs and deserves; it is a religion which encourages and invites man to combine the virtue of both. Man is, after all, a combination of body and soul; he is neither body alone nor spirit alone. If his life is to be a happy one, he must unite physical perfections with the spiritual one.

This *ummah* then is the medium and well-balanced one; it is a criterion to judge and weigh both sides of extremes. It is, therefore, the witness for all the people who have deviated from the middle way going to this side or that. And the Prophet – the most perfect and the ideal example of this *ummah – is* the witness for this *ummah.* The Prophet is the criterion to judge the condition of this *ummah's* individuals; and the *ummah,* in its turn, is the criterion to judge the condition of other people; it is the point to which the two extremes are expected to return.

COMMENT : What this exegete has said is true in itself, but it does not explain the wordings of this verse. The *ummah,* by virtue of its position in the middle, may be called a criterion to judge the extremes, as well as a point to which the people of the two extremes should return. But it does not make it a "witness" for the two extremes, nor it gives the *ummah* ability to observe the said extremes. Apparently, there is no correlation between

being a medium (in the above-mentioned sense) and being a witness. Also, there is no reason why the Messenger of Allãh should be made a witness for them; there is no correlation between the two witnessings. But the verse clearly says that the Messenger of Allãh shall be a witness for the *ummah,* because the *ummah* shall be a witness for the people, and it shall acquire that status because it is a medium *ummah.*

Moreover, the witnessing, referred to in this verse, is one of the Qur'ãnic realities, which has been mentioned repeatedly in the Divine Speech; and looking at various contexts where it has been referred to, we find that its connotation differs completely from the above-quoted meaning. Allãh says: *How will it be, then, when We bring from every people a witness and bring you as a witness for these?* (4:41) ; *And on the day when We will raise up a witness out of every nation, then shall no permission be given to those who disbelieve, nor shall they be made to solicit favour* (16:84); . . . *and the Book shall be laid down and the prophets and the witnesses shall be brought up* . . . (39:69). Note that witnessing in these verses is unconditional, and the obvious meaning is that they shall be witnesses for the deeds of their nations, and will also testify that the messengers of Allãh did convey the Divine Message to those nations, as is made clear in the verse: *Most certainly then We will question those to whom* (the messengers) *were sent, and most certainly We will question the messengers* (7:6). No doubt they will give the evidence in the hereafter; but they must have seen the events in this life, as may be inferred by the words of 'Isã (a.s.) quoted in the Qur'ãn: . . . *and I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst take me* (away) *completely, Thou were the watcher over them, and Thou art witness of all things* (5:117);. . . *and on the Day of Resurrection he* (*i.e.,* 'Isã) *shall be a witness against them* (4:159).

Obviously, our normal senses, with all their powers, cannot perceive except the exterior forms of deeds and actions, and that also of a thing which is present, which is within the reach. They cannot perceive a non-existent or a non-present item. And it is completely beyond their power to know, comprehend or identify

the realities of those actions and deeds; nor can they observe the immaterial ideas like belief or disbelief, and success or failure. In short, no man can witness a thing which is hidden from the five senses, nor can he observe the esoteric ideas and characteristics that are locked into another person's heart. But it is these hidden realities which will be taken account of, and looked into, on the Day of Resurrection, as Allãh says: . . . *but He will call you to account for what your hearts have earned* (2:225). Obviously, these things cannot be seen even by those who are present, let alone those who are absent. It can be done only by a man whose affairs are managed directly by Allãh, and whom Allãh makes to "see" the hidden realities. This fact may be inferred from the words of Allãh: *And those whom they call upon besides Him have no authority for intercession, but he who bears witness of the truth* (*i.e.,* of the reality) *and they know* (43:86). Surely, 'Isã (a.s.) is included in this exception, because, Allãh has testified that he is one of those who shall bear witness (as is seen from the above-mentioned two verses). Thus, he is one of those who had "seen" the realities and known the hidden factors of the deeds of their *ummah.*

In short, the witnessing mentioned in the verse under discussion does not mean that this *ummah* follows a religion which combines physical perfection with spiritual sublimity. Certainly, this explanation has nothing to do with the meaning of "witness" nor does it fit the apparent meaning of the above-quoted verses.

Actually, they have been called "witnesses" of the people, because they see and observe in this world the realities of the people's actions – felicity and infelicity, rejection and acceptance, submission and arrogance. And they shall give evidence for or against those people on the Day of Judgment, the day when Allãh will make every thing to testify for or against a man, not excepting his own limbs and organs; the day when the Messenger will say: "*O my Lord! surely my people treated this Qur'ãn as a forsaken thing* (25:30).

Also, it is known that the whole *ummah* could not attain to this position; it is a special status given to only the pure friends of Allãh. Even those who are only slightly below them in the ranks of

felicity, and other just and pious believers are not included in this verse – let alone the rubble of the nation, or the Nimrods and Pharaohs of the *ummah. You* will see in the Commentary of the verse 4:49 (*And whoever obeys Allãh and the Messenger, these are with those upon whom Allãh has bestowed favours from among the prophets and the truthful and the martyrs and the good ones; and excellent are these as companions,*), that the least that can be said about the martyrs – the witnesses of the deeds – is that they are under the guardian-ship of Allãh, enjoying His favours, and proceeding on the straight path. Also, it has been described in short in the explanation of the verse: *The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours* . . . (1:7).

When Allãh told this *ummah* that it was made witness for the people, the meaning was that the "witnesses" would be from among this *ummah.* In this respect, it is not different from those verses which tell the Children of Israel that they were made to excel over the worlds. Such verses show that there were among the Children of Israel such personalities who were given that distinction; not that every individual of them was superior to the worlds. A distinction enjoyed by a group is attributed to the whole nation, because the group is a part of the nation. Likewise, this *ummah* has been said to be "witnesses over the people", because there are, in this *ummah,* people who shall be witnesses of the people, and the Messenger shall be witness of them.

Objection: Allãh says in the Qur'ãn: *And* (as for) *those who believe in Allãh and His messengers, these it is that are the truthful and the witnesses near their Lord* (57:19). It shows that all the believers, in general, are "the witnesses".

Reply: The phrase "near their Lord" proves that Allãh will include them among the witnesses on the Day of Resurrection, a rank which they had not got in this life. It is like the verse which says: *And* (as for) *those who believe and their offspring follow them in faith, We will unite with them their offspring* . . . (52:21). Apart from that, this verse is general and shows that all the believers from all the nations will be witnesses near Allãh;

it does not speak about this *ummah* especially; therefore, it is of no use to the objector.

Objection: If the *ummah* has been made a "medium" in this meaning, it does not necessarily follow that the *ummah,* or a certain group among the *ummah,* should be witnesses of the people's deeds, nor that the Messenger of Allãh should be witness of those witnesses. Therefore, the problem which had arisen in the previous explanation, remains unanswered even by your exegesis.

Reply: The verse says that those people were made witnesses because they were made a medium nation. It means that this "mediumship" is something which brings the "evidence" and "witnesses" in its wake. And Allãh says: O *you who believe! bow down and prostrate yourselves and worship your Lord, and do good that you may succeed. And strive hard in* (the way of) *Allãh,* (such) *a striving as is due to Him; He has chosen you and has not laid upon you any hardship in religion; the faith of your father, Ibrãhīm; he named you Muslims before and in this, so that the Messenger may be a witness for you, and you may be witnesses for the people; therefore, establish prayer and pay zakãt and hold fast to Allãh; He is your Guardian; how excellent the Guardian and how excellent the Helper!* (22:77 - 78). Note that the distinction that the Messenger should be a witness for them and they should be witnesses for the people, is based on two things: First, that they were chosen by Allãh; and, second, that Allãh had not laid upon them any hardship in religion. Then the religion is defined as *the faith of your father, Ibrãhīm,* who had *named you Muslims before.* He had used this name for you when he prayed to Allãh on your behalf, in these words: *and* (raise) *from our offspring a group submitting* (Muslims) *to Thee.* Allãh granted his prayer and made you Muslims, you have surrendered to His order and command; you neither disobey Him nor behave arrogantly before Him; that is why you feel no hardship in the religion, no rule looks difficult for you to follow. You have, therefore, been chosen by Him, and guided on the straight path, submitting to your Lord in all affairs. We have made you like this, in order that the Messenger

may be a witness for you and you may be witnesses of the people. Accordingly, you shall be a medium between the Messenger and the people; you shall be connected to the Messenger on one side and to the people on the other. In this way, the wish of Ibrãhīm has been fulfilled about you and the Messenger, as he had prayed: *Our Lord! and raise up in them an Apostle from among themselves who shall recite to them Thy communications and teach them the Book and the wisdom, and purify them* (2:129). You are that Muslim *ummah;* the Messenger has transmitted the knowledge of the Book and wisdom to your hearts; and you have been purified by him. Purification has cleansed your hearts from impurities and freed it for My worship and obedience (and as mentioned earlier, it is what Islam means). Therefore, you are the Muslims, sincere in your worship. Of course, the Messenger has precedence over you, because it is he who has guided and trained you. He has precedence over the whole *ummah,* and you are the medium group – joined to the Messenger on one side, and to the people on the other.

There are many associations at the beginning and the end of the verse which point to this meaning; one may understand them on meditation; and we shall further explain it in a proper place, Allãh willing.

However, the foregoing explanation shows that :

First: The fact that they have been made a medium *ummah* has a direct bearing on the two objectives. In other words, the facts that "you may be witnesses for the people", and that "the Messenger may be a witness for you", both are the direct result of their being "a medium nation".

Second: They have been called a medium *ummah* because they are placed between the Messenger and the people – not because they are a medium between two extremes, or between the "people of spirit" and the "people of body".

Third: The verse in its connotation has connection with the verses of the prayer of Ibrãhīm (a.s.) ; and this witnessing is a privilege of the said Muslim *ummah.*

One thing more: It appears from the Qur'ãn that witnessing about the deeds is not exclusively reserved for the human witnesses. Everything which has any connection with a deed –

angels, time and place, religion and Book, limbs and organs, senses and hearts, for example – will testify about it.

It may be inferred from the above that the same place and limbs etc. which we have in this life will be present on the Day of Judgment. Also, it appears that all the above-mentioned things have a sort of a life and perception with which they can perceive the particulars of deeds – those particulars are imprinted on them. It is not necessary that every life should be like our own; there is no reason why life should be of only one type. It cannot be said that because time or space does not have a life like ours, therefore, it has no life.

This topic has been mentioned here just to complete the picture. Details about each point will be given in more suitable places.

QUR'ÃN: *And We had not made the qiblah which you had but that We might know him who follows the Messenger from him who turns back upon his heels:* The words: "We might know", may be explained in two ways:

First: It may mean, 'My Messenger might know'. Great people generally use this style to speak on behalf of themselves and their subordinates. For example, a ruler says: 'We killed him', or, 'We imprisoned him', although it is his employees, not him-self who kill or imprison.

Second: It may refer to that knowledge of Allãh which accompanies the creation or existence of a thing, and not to that knowledge which Allãh has of everything before that thing comes into being. "Turning back upon one's heels" is an allegorical expression, which denotes evasion or dissension. When a man, who is standing, turns from one direction to another, he turns on his heels. It is like the words of Allãh: *And whoever shall turn his back to them on that day . . .* (8:16).

Obviously, this verse aims to remove any possible misgivings which the believers would have had because of the change of *qiblah:* Why *qiblah* was changed? Why the previous *qiblah* was abrogated? What will happen to the prayers which they had prayed facing Baytu 'l-Maqdis?

Also, it is clear that "the *qiblah* which you had" refers to Baytu'l-Maqdis, and not to the Ka'bah (as someone has said). If his explanation is accepted, it would imply that both Baytu '1-Maqdis and Ka'bah were prescribed as *qiblah* twice, not once. But there is nothing to support this suggestion.

However, it was but natural that the believers should feel some uneasiness because of this change.

First of all, as Allãh had already decided that He would ultimately make the Ka'bah as the *qiblah* of the Muslims, then why did He make Baytu'l-Maqdis as their *qiblah* for so many years in the beginning?

The verse says that all these rules and legislations are made for the benefit of the people themselves. The laws of religion aim at training the people and perfecting them; separating the believers from others; distinguishing the obedient from the disobedient, the submissive from the arrogants. And it was for the same reason that the previous *qiblah* was prescribed for you. It was done in order that "We might know him who follows the Messenger", that is, We might distinguish him who follows the Messenger "from him who turns back upon his heels". In usual way, the sentence should have said, "who follows thee", but the Qur'ãn has used the noun "the Messenger" instead of pronoun, it is to remind us that his status of Messengership has a direct bearing on this separation between obedient and disobedient ones.

"We had not made the *qiblah* which you had": That is, We had not made Baytu 'l-Maqdis as *qiblah* for you but for the reasons described.

Their second worry could be about the prayers which they had prayed facing Baytu 'l-Maqdis. What would be its legal status, as it was prayed towards a building that was no longer valid?

Allãh says that Baytu 'l-Maqdis was a valid *qiblah* as long as it was not abrogated. When Allãh abrogates a rule, it looses its validity from the time of its abrogation, not from the original legislation; and it is a result of Allãh's affection and mercy to the believers.

The above misgiving and its reply is inferred from the words: "and Allãh was not going to make your faith to be

fruitless; most surely Allãh is Affectionate, Merciful to the people." *"ar-Ra'fah"* (اَلرَّأفَةُ) and *"ar-rnḥmah"* (اَلرَّحْمَةُ) both basically denote mercy and compassion; but the former usually has the connotation of pity for an afflicted one, while the latter is general.

QUR'ÃN: *Indeed We see the turning of thy face to heaven, so We shall surely turn thee to a qiblah which thou shalt be pleased with:* The verse shows that the Messenger of Allãh, before the revelation of the verse of *qiblah* – that is, this very verse – used to turn his face to heaven, as he waited – or hoped – that Allãh would send some commandment regarding *qiblah.* He did so because he wished that Allãh would honour him with *a qiblah* especially prescribed for him. It does not mean that he was not pleased with Baytu'l-Maqdis as his *qiblah* – for be it from the Messenger to do so! Allãh says: "We shall surely turn thee to *a qiblah* which thou shalt be pleased with." To be pleased with a thing does not necessarily mean to be displeased with its alternative.

The traditions, describing the occasion of revelation of this verse, say that the Jews reviled the Muslims and boasted against them, all because the Muslims prayed towards Baytu 'l-Maqdis – the Jews' *qiblah.* It made the Messenger of Allãh sad; so he came out in the dark of the night looking towards heaven waiting for a revelation from Allãh, hoping that it would cheer him up. Then this verse was revealed.

Now, suppose he would have received revelation to continue praying towards the previous *qiblah,* that is, Baytu 'l-Maqdis, it would have been his proof against the Jews that, he followed the *qiblah by* the order of Allãh and not in imitation of the Jews. The fact is that there never was, nor there ever is, anything to be ashamed of, if the Prophet and the Muslims prayed facing Baytu 'l-Maqdis, because the servant has no choice but to accept and obey the order of the Master. But the verse promulgated a new *qiblah.* It removed the cause of the Jews' revile and boast, in addition to defining the new *qiblah.* In this way, it was doubly welcomed – it was a proof against the Jews as well as a source of pleasure for the Messenger of Allãh (s.a.w.a.).

QUR'ÃN: *turn then thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are, turn your face towards it. "ash-Shaṭr"* (اَلشَّطْرُ) translated here as "towards", literally means "part of". "Part of the Sacred Mosque" refers to the Ka'bah. Allãh used this expression, instead of saying, towards the Ka'bah, or, towards the Sacred House, to keep the new rule parallel to the previous one. They used to pray to a part of the Remote Mosque, that is, its well-known Rock; so it was changed to a part of the Sacred Mosque, that is, the Ka'bah. It is quite apart from the fact that the addition of the word, "part of" to "the Mosque" and its qualification with the adjective "Sacred" gives many details of this legislation which would have been lost if this phrase were changed to "the Ka'bah" or "the Sacred House".

Allãh begins this verse by giving the order personally to His Messenger (*turn then thy face towards the Sacred Mosque*), and ends it by including all the Muslims in it (*and wherever you are, turn your face towards it*). It supports the traditions that the *qiblah* was changed when the Messenger of Allãh (s.a.w.a.) was praying and the Muslims were praying behind him. There-fore, he was personally told to turn towards the Ka'bah during that prayer; then the verse went on describing a general order which covered him and all the Muslims, for every time and in every place.

QUR'ÃN: *and those who have been given the Book most surely know that it is the truth from their Lord:* Their Book contains the prophecies showing the truth of the prophethood of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), or that this True Prophet would pray facing to-wards the Sacred Mosque. In any case, the verse shows that the Jews' Book had some verses which confirmed – explicitly or implicitly – the truth of this legislation; *and Allãh is not at all heedless of what they do;* He knows how they hide the truth and conceal the knowledge which they had been given.

QUR'ÃN: *And even if you bring to those who have been given the Book every sign they would not follow your qiblah:* The verse rebukes them for their obstinacy and stubbornness. Their refusal

is not because truth is hidden from them. No, they know very well that it is the truth – they have no doubt about it. Yet they create mischief and invent objection after objection, because they hate the religion and reject the truth. No proof would satisfy them; no sign would make them change their attitude. Even if you bring to them every sign they would not follow your *qiblah,* because they are obstinate and refuse to accept the truth; *nor can you be a follower of their qiblah,* because you have a clear proof from your Lord. This Qur'ãnic sentence may also be interpreted as a prohibition given in the form of a proposition. *Neither are they the followers of each other's qiblah.* The Jews face towards Baytu 'l-Maqdis wherever they may be; and the Christians face towards the East wherever they may be. Neither the former would follow the *qiblah,* of the latter, nor the latter would accept the *qiblah* of the former – because all of them follow their own desires.

QUR'ÃN: and if you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, then you shall most surely be among the unjust: The admonition (in singular pronoun) is addressed to the Prophet, but it is really meant for his ummah. It also indicates that the Jews, in their recalcitrance, follow their desire and have become unjust.

QUR'ÃN: *Those whom We have given the Book recognize him as they recognize their sons:* The pronoun "him" refers to the Messenger of Allãh, not to "the Book"; the simile, "as they recognize their sons", fits recognition of a man, not of a book. Nobody says: He recognizes this book as he recognizes his son. Moreover, the subject of the speech is the Messenger of Allãh and the revelation he received regarding the *qiblah,* it has nothing to do with the Book which was given to the People of the Book. The verse says: The People of the Book recognize the Messenger of Allãh by the prophecies which their Book contains, *as they recognize their sons, and a party of them most surely conceal the truth while they know* (*it*).

The previous verses were addressed to the Prophet (in second

person singular pronouns) ; then in this verse he has been mentioned in third person, and the talk is addressed to the believers; then the next verse again reverts to the previous style and is addressed to the Prophet. The style was changed here to show that the truth of the Prophet was clear and well-known to the People of the Book. This change reminds one of a speaker who is talking before a group, one of whom surpasses all in virtues and excellence. The speaker, therefore, addresses him especially (in recognition of his excellence), although the talk is meant for the whole group. Then for some reason, he wants to describe the virtues and excellence of that person; now he turns towards the audience and treats him as absent, mentioning him by pronouns of third person. When that topic is finished, he again assumes the previous style of addressing him directly.

QUR'ÃN: *The truth is from your Lord, therefore you should not be of the doubters:* It emphasizes the preceding statement and strongly interdicts doubting. The talk in singular pronouns is addressed to the Prophet but is actually intended for the *ummah.*

QUR'ÃN: *And every one has a direction to which he would turn; therefore, hasten to* (do) *good work: 'al-Wijhah"* (اَلوِجْهَـةُ) on paradigm of, as well as synonymous to, *al-qiblah* (اَلقِبْلَـةُ), has the same meaning 'that to which one faces'. The verse sums up the foregoing statements and draws their attention to another more important reality. Every nation has its own *qiblah,* pre-scribed for them according to their own needs and atmosphere. Being *qiblah is* not an inherent and inseparable characteristic of any place or direction; it is not a natural or personal feature of a thing which could not be changed. It is therefore not good for you to waste your time and energy in disputation and argumentation about it. You should rather hasten to do good work and try to excel others in virtuous deeds; Allãh is surely going to gather you on a day about which there is no doubt; and *wherever you are, Allãh will bring you all together; surely Allãh has power over all things.*

This verse is applicable to the subject of *qiblah,* as it comes

between the verses dealing with that subject. Also, it may be applied to the creative affairs as it points to the Divine Measure and Decree and to the related legislation. We shall explain this topic, Allãh willing, in another place.

QUR'ÃN: *And from whatsoever place you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque:* According to some exegetes it means: And from any place you come forth and at any place you come down, turn your face to the Sacred Mosque. Others say that it means: And from whatever town you come out.

The phrase, "from whatsoever place you come forth", literally means as follows: 'from whatsoever place thou halt come forth'. Possibly it may refer to Mecca from which the Messenger of Allãh (s.a.w.a.) had to come out, as Allãh says: . . . *the town of thine which has driven thee out* . . . (47:13).

However, the, verse says that the law to face the Ka'bah is a firm order which you have to observe in Mecca as well as in other towns and places. Then Allãh emphasizes it in these words: *and surely it is the very truth from your Lord, and Allãh is not at all heedless of what you do.*

QUR'ÃN: *And from whatsoever place you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are turn your faces towards it:* The first sentence is repeated here word by word, to show that this law is to be followed in every condition. For example, one says: Fear Allãh when you stand up; fear Allãh when you sit down; fear Allãh when you speak; fear Allãh when you are silent. The speaker wants to emphasize that you should fear Allãh in all conditions and in every situation. This point would be lost if the above sentence were reconstructed in the following way: Fear Allãh when you stand up, when you sit down, when you speak, and when you are silent. The meaning is as follows: Face towards the Sacred Mosque of Mecca whence you had to come out, and wherever you happen to be in the world, turn your faces towards it.

QUR'ÃN: *so that people shall have no argument against you,*

except such of them as are unjust; so do not fear them, and fear Me; and so that I may complete My favour on you and that you may walk on the right course: These sentences describe the following three benefits of this commandment, and at the same time put the utmost emphasis on obeying this law:

First: The Jews knew from their books that the promised Prophet would face towards the Ka‘bah, turning away from Baytu ‘l-Maqdis, as Allãh has pointed to this fact in a foregoing verse, *and those who have been given the Book most surely know that it is the truth from their Lord* (2:144). If the *qiblah* were not changed, the Jews could have used it as a proof against the Muslims that the Prophet was not the one whose advent was foretold in _ the previous books. But now the promulgation of this order has not left them any room for disputation – except those of them who are unjust. This exception gives the following meaning: Of course, those of them who are unjust – because they follow their desire – will never be satisfied; they will continue arguing against it; “so do not fear them”, because they are unjust and they follow their desires – and Allãh does not guide aright the unjust people – “and fear Me”.

Second: Obedience of this rule will lead the Muslims to the completion of Divine favour on them, by perfecting their religion. We shall explain the meaning of the “completion of favour”, when we write the verse: *This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed* My *favour on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion* (5:4).

Third: There is the hope that through this rule the Muslims will be guided to the straight path. We have explained the meaning of guidance under the verse: *Guide us to the straight path* (1:5).

An exegete has written: “The verse of *qiblah* contains the words, ‘and so that I may complete My favour on you and that you may walk on the right course’. Similar words have been used in the ‘Chapter of Victory’, while mentioning the victory of Mecca: *Surely We have given to you a clear victory, so that Allãh may forgive you your* (*i.e.,* your *ummah* their) *past faults and those to follow and complete His favour to you and keep you on a straight path* (48:1-2). This almost identical expression shows

that the verse of *qiblah* too alludes to the victory of Mecca."

According to that exegete, "the Ka'bah in the beginning of Islam was occupied by the idols, which were put there by the polytheists – the power in those days was in the hands of the pagans. Islam was weak, it had no authority or power. There-fore, Allãh told the Prophet to face towards Baytu 'l-Maqdis, the *qiblah* of the Jews, who were nearer than the polytheists, to Islam. Then the Prophet emigrated to Medina, and Islam began to gain strength. The time was coming nearer when Mecca would be conquered and the House of Allãh cleansed of the idols' pollution. Allãh therefore ordered the Prophet to change the direction of *qiblah.* It was a great bounty favour which Allãh has reserved for the Muslims. And Allãh gave a promise, included in this verse of *qiblah,* that He would complete His favour on them and guide them to the right course. It was implied in these words that the Ka'bah would soon be cleansed of the idols and images; the Muslims would be exclusively connected to the Ka'bah as it would remain exclusively under their care. This verse actually gave the good tidings of the conquest of Mecca. Thereafter, when Mecca was conquered, Allãh reminded them of that promise by using almost similar words in its description: *". . . and complete His favours to you and keep you on a straight path."*

COMMENT: This explanation, although apparently well-founded, is in fact not based on deep reflection; because the words of the Qur'ãn do not support it. How do we know that the verse of *qiblah* contains a promise to complete the favour? The answer is: Because of li (لِـ a preposition used here for the final cause; so that, in order that) in *li-utimma* (لأُتِمَّ = *so that I may complete. . .*). And the verse in Chapter 48 (Victory), which, according to him, was revealed in fulfilment of that promise, also begins with the same proposition: so *that Allãh may forgive you your* (*i.e.,* your *ummah* their) *past faults and those to follow and complete His favour to you and keep you on a straight path* (48:2). Clearly, both verses contain the same promise to complete the favour in future; neither gives the good news of its fulfilment yet. Moreover, the verse of *qiblah* gives this promise to all the Muslims while

that of the Victory uses singular pronouns and is addressed to the Prophet personally. Clearly they have been revealed in different contexts.

If there is any verse showing the fulfilment of the promise given in both these verses, then it can only be the verse: *This day I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion* (5:3). We shall explain the meaning of *an-ni'mah* (اَلنِّعْمَةُ = favour, bounty, blessing) in the explanation of this verse, and there we shall describe what was the favour and bounty that was completed on that day, and by which Allãh has put the Muslims under His obligation for ever.

There are two other verses which, like the above-mentioned two, contain the promise of completion of favour; *but He wishes to purify you and that He may complete His favour on you so that you may be grateful* (5:6)*; even thus does He complete His favour upon you, that haply you may submit* (16:81). We shall write under these verses somethings related to this topic.

QUR'ÃN: *Even as We have sent among you a Messenger from among you who recites to you Our communications and purifies you and teaches you the Book and the wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know:* The verse begins with the word *kamã* (كَمَا= like, as, even as), which is obviously a compound of *ka* (كَ = like, as) and *mã* (مَا) which changes the verb into *maṣdar.* The connotation, therefore, is as follows: 'We have be-stowed Our favours on you by appointing the Ka'bah as your *qiblah.* It is the House that Ibrãhīm built, and he prayed to Us for its good and blessings. We have done this in the same way as We have favoured you by sending to you a Messenger from among you who recites to you Our communications and teaches you the Book and the wisdom and purifies you. We did so in answer to the pleading of Ibrãhīm, when he and his son, Ismã'īl, prayed to Us: *Our Lord! and raise up in them a Messenger from among themselves, who shall recite to them Thy communications and teach them the Book and wisdom and purify them.'* This verse, in short, says that it was Allãh's favour on this *ummah* that he sent the Prophet among them, as it was a favour to appoint the Ka'bah as their *qiblah.*

Who are the people referred to by the second person pronouns in “among you a Messenger from among you”? The application may be restricted or extended, depending on the level of explanation whether it is interpreted esoterically, literally or legislatively. Esoterically, it is addressed especially to the earlier mentioned: *Submissive group* (2:128), that is, those who were given authority over religion and followers of religion; literally all the Muslims from the progeny of Ismã‘īl (i.e., the Arabs of Mudar tribe) are included; legislatively, it covers all the Muslims, Arabs and non-Arabs alike.

QUR’ÃN : *recites to you Our communications: “al-Ãyãt”* (اَلآيَاتُ = verses, signs – translated here as communications) obviously refers to the verses of the Qur’ãn, because it is the words (not the meanings) that are recited; *‘at-tazkiyah”* (اَلتـَّزْكِيةُ) = to purify) is to remove dirt, filth and blemish. The Prophet cleansed them thoroughly – from wrong beliefs like polytheism and rejection of true faith, from vile and base character like pride and avarice, and from evil and immoral actions and things like murder, fornication and intoxicants.

QUR’ÃN: *and teaches you the Book and the wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know:* It encompasses all primary and secondary aspects of religious knowledge.

These verses have variously changed the pronouns used for Allãh, using third and first persons, singular and plural; and for others, using first, second and third persons. The reason of every such change may be understood by a little meditation.

TRADITIONS

al-Qummi narrates in his *at-Tafsīr* that aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said about the words of Allãh, *The fools among the people will say . . . :* “The *qiblah* was changed to the Ka‘bah after the Prophet prayed towards Baytu ‘l-Maqdis for thirteen years in Mecca; and (also)

after his emigration to Medina he prayed towards Baytu ‘l-Maqdis for seven months.” (He said:) “Then Allãh turned him towards Mecca. And it was because the Jews used to revile the Messenger of Allãh (s.a.w.a.), saying that he was their follower (as) he prayed to their *qiblah.* The Messenger of Allãh (s.a.w.a.) became very sad because of it; and he came out in the middle of the night looking to the horizons of the heaven, waiting for an order in this regard from Allãh. When it was day and the time of the noon prayer arrived, (the Prophet, s.a.w.a.) was in the mosque of Banu Salim. And he had (already) prayed two *rak‘ahs* of *ẓuhr,* when Jibrīl came down; and he held the Prophet’s upper arms and turned him towards the Ka‘bah. And he brought down to him (the revelation): *Indeed We see the turning of thy face to heaven, so We shall surely turn thee to a qiblah which thou shalt like; turn then thy face towards the Sacred Mosque.* Thus, the Prophet had prayed two *rak‘ahs* towards Baytu ‘l-Maqdis, and (prayed the remaining) two *rak‘ahs* towards the Ka‘bah. Then the Jews and the fools said: ‘*What has turned them from their qiblah which they had?’ ”* (*Majma‘u ’l-bayãn*)

The author says: There are numerous traditions of similar meaning narrated by the Sunni and Shi‘ah narrators, which are recorded in the books of traditions. The reports differ about the time when the *qiblah* was changed. Most of them say that it happened in the month of *Rajab* in the second year of *hijrah* – the seventeenth month after the emigration; and this timing looks more correct. Allãh willing, we shall describe some other related topics in a separate discourse.

There are traditions from Sunni narrators, which explain the witnessing of this *ummah* concerning the people and the witnessing of the Prophet for them, in these terms: “The nations will deny, on the Day of Judgment, that the prophets had conveyed any message to them. Then Allãh will ask the prophets to bring their proof that they had really conveyed the message – and Allãh knows it better. So, the *ummah* of Muhammad (s. a. w. a.) will be brought in and they will testify (for the prophets).

Then the (other) nations will say: 'How do you know?' They will say: 'We knew it from the information which Allãh revealed in His Book on the tongue of His truthful Prophet.' Then Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) will be brought there and he will be asked about the condition of his *ummah. So* he will testify for their purity, justice and probity. And this is the meaning of the words of Allãh: *How will it be, then, when We bring from every people a witness and bring you as a witness for these?* (4:41)

The author says: This theme is supported by other traditions narrated by aṣ-Ṣuyũṭī in *ad-Durru 'l-manthũr* and others. But how is it that the Prophet would testify about his *ummah* that they were pure and just? It can be accepted only if it is taken to mean that he will testify for a selected group, not for the whole *ummah.* Otherwise, such traditions have to be rejected, as is self-evident from the Qur'ãn and the *sunnah.* How can the Prophet sanction or approve all those oppressions, cruelties, tyrannies and massacres perpetrated by this *ummah,* and whose like was never seen in any of the previous nations? How can he testify that all those Pharaohs and *ṭãghũts* of this *ummah* were pure, just and upright? What is this tradition, if not a calumny against this up-right religion? A joke with the realities of this illustrious faith? Moreover, it is based on the wrong idea that a hearsay testimony is acceptable!

The correct meaning of the verse may be seen in a tradition narrated from al-Bãqir (a.s.) that he said: "Only the Imãms and the Messengers will be witnesses for the people. And as for the (general) *ummah,* it is unthinkable that Allãh would call them as witnesses – and there are among them those whose testimony is not accepted for a bundle of vegetable." (*al-Manãqib*)

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said about the verse, *that you may be witnesses. . .:* "(It is) then (wrong) if you think that Allãh in this verse means all the monotheists, the people of *qiblah* (*i.e.,* the Muslims). Do you think that a person whose evidence is not acceptable in this world about *a aṣ-ṣã'* (الصَّاع = a weight about 3 kilogram) of date, Allãh will call him as a witness on the Day of Judgment

The author says: We have described it under that verse with the help of the Qur'ãn itself.

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) narrates from his father, from the Prophet, that he said: "It is among the (bounties) which Allãh gave to my *ummah* and (by which) He made them excel all other nations, that He gave them three attributes which (previously) were not given but to a prophet . . . And when He sent a prophet, made him a witness for his nation; and surely Allãh, Blessed and High is He, has made my *ummah* a witness for the creatures, as He says: *so that the Messenger may be a witness for you, and you may be witnesses for the people* (22:78). (*Qurbu 'l-asnãd*)

The author says: This *ḥadīth is* not in conflict with the above explanation, because the word *ummah* refers to that *submissive ummah* in which the prayer of Ibrãhīm (a.s.) was accepted.

Amiru '1-mu'minin (a.s.) says, *inter alia,* in *a ḥadīth* describing the Day of Judgment: "They will gather in a place where every one will be required to speak; (but) no one shall speak: *except he whom the Beneficent Allãh permits and who speaks the right thing* (78:38). Then the Messenger shall be asked to stand (and speak); and that is (the meaning of) His word to Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) : *How will it be, then, when We bring from every people a witness and bring you as a witness for these?* (4:41). And he is the witness of the witnesses, and the witnesses are the Messengers." (al-'Ayyãshī)

Abu Basir, narrating from the fifth or the sixth Imãm, says: "I said to him: 'Did (Allãh) order him (i.e., the Prophet, s.a.w. a.) to pray towards Baytu 'l-Maqdis?' He said: 'Yes. Don't you see

that Allãh, Blessed and High is He!, says: *And We had not made the qiblah which you had but that We might distinguish him who follows the Messenger from him who turns back upon his heels . . .' "* (*at-Tahdhīb*)

The author says: This *ḥadīth* shows that the words: *which you had,* are related to: *the qiblah,* and that the whole phrase refers to Baytu 'l-Maqdis; and it was the *qiblah* which the Messenger of Allãh (s.a.w.a.) had. As we have mentioned earlier, this explanation is in conformity with the context. Also, it supports what has been narrated in a *ḥadīth* from al-'Askarī (a.s.):

"The Meccans were attached to the Ka'bah. Therefore Allãh wished to distinguish the followers of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), from his opponents, by following the *qiblah* which he disliked. And because the people of Medina were inclined towards Baytu 'l-Maqdis, He ordered them to go against it and to turn towards the Ka'bah, in order that He may show who follows Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) (even) in that which is not to his liking; such a man, then, believes in his truth and agrees with him . . . "

It also shows the incorrectness of the interpretation, to which we had made a passing reference in the Commentary, and which runs as follows: The phrase, *which you had, is* the second object of the verb, *We had not made.* Accordingly, the verse means: And We did not make the *qiblah,* that is, the Ka'bah, which you had before Baytu 'l-Maqdis. In support of this interpretation, they quote the words, *but that We might distinguish him who follows the Messenger from him who turns back upon his heels.* The absurdity of this interpretation and of this argument is self-evident.

az-Zubayri, narrating from aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) says: " I asked him: 'Will you not tell me about the faith, whether it is word with deed or (only) word without deed?' He said: 'The faith is deed, all of it; and (utterance of) the word is one of those deeds; (it is) obligatory from Allãh, described in His Book; its light is clear, its proof well-established; the Book bears witness for it and calls to it. And when Allãh turned his Prophet towards the Ka'bah,

away from Baytu ‘l-Maqdis, the Muslims said to the Prophet : “What do you see (about) our prayers which we used to pray towards Baytu ‘l-Maqdis? What shall be our position about these? And what shall be the position of those of us who have passed away and they were praying towards Baytu ‘1-Maqdis?” Then Allãh revealed (the verse) : *and Allãh was not going to make your faith to be fruitless; most surely Allãh is Affectionate, Merciful to the people.* Thus Allãh named the prayer as “faith”. Whoever therefore fears Allãh, guarding his limbs (from sins), fulfilling (obligation of) each of these limbs which Allãh has laid down for it, he shall meet Allãh with perfect faith, (and he shall be) from the people of the Garden. And whoever acted falsely about any of these (limbs), or transgressed what Allãh had ordered about it, he shall meet Allãh (as one) having an in-complete faith.’ “ (al-‘Ayyãshī)

The author says: It has been narrated also by al-Kulayni. Although it says that the verse, *and Allãh was not going to make your faith fruitless . . .,* was revealed after the *qiblah* was changed, yet it does not go against the explanation given in the Commentary.

“The Prophet prayed towards Baytu ‘l-Maqdis for thirteen years in Mecca, and nineteen months in Medina.* Then the Jews reviled him, saying: ‘You are a follower of our *qiblah.’* He was very much saddened because of it. Then one night he came out turning his face towards the horizons of the heaven. When it was morning, he prayed the dawn (prayer). Then when he had prayed two *rak‘ahs* of *ẓuhr,* Jibrīl came and told him (the message of Allãh): *Indeed We see the turning of thy face to heaven, so We shall surely turn thee to a qiblah which thou shalt like. . .;* then he took hold of the Prophet and turned him towards the Ka‘bah, and those who were (praying) behind him turned their faces (likewise), until the men stood in place of the women, and the women in place of the men. Thus, the early part of his prayer

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* The Prophet emigrated to Medina in the month of *Rabī‘ul-awwal.* The nineteenth month after *hijrah* was *Ramaḍãn* of the second year. (*tr.*)

was towards Baytu ʿl-Maqdis, and the latter part towards the Ka‘bah. Then the news reached another mosque in Medina, and its people had already prayed two *rak‘ahs* of *‘aṣr* (to Baytu ‘1-Maqdis), and they turned towards the (new) *qiblah. So* the early part of their prayer was to Baytu ʿl-Maqdis and the latter part towards the Ka‘bah; so that mosque was named the Mosque of the Two Qiblahs." (*al-Faqīh*)

The author says: al-Qummi has narrated a similar *ḥadīth,* with one variation that the Prophet was in the mosque of Banũ. Sãlim.

al-Bãqir (a.s.) said explaining the words of Allãh, *turn then thy face towards the Sacred Mosque:* "Face towards the *qiblah,* and do not turn away from the *qiblah;* otherwise your prayer will be void. For, Allãh says to His Prophet concerning the obligatory prayer, *turn then your face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are, turn your face towards it."* (al-‘Ayyãshī)

The author says: There are numerous *al-mustafīḍah** traditions which say that this verse was revealed about the obligatory prayer.

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said about the verse: *Those whom We have given the Book recognize him as they recognize their sons:* "This verse was revealed about the Jews and the Christians. Allãh, Blessed and High is He! says: *Those whom We have given the Book recognize him,* that is, recognize the Messenger of Allãh (s.a.w.a.), as they recognize their sons. For, surely Allãh, Mighty and Great is He!, had revealed to them, in the Torah and the Injīl and Zabũr, the attributes of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), and the attributes of his companions, as well as (the story of) his emigration. And this is (the meaning of) the words of Allãh: *Muhammad is the Messenger of Allãh; and those with him are severe against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves; you will see them*

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* *al-Mustafīḍah* (اَلمُسْتَفِيضَةُ) = A tradition narrated by a great many narrators, but to a degree less than that required for *mutawãtir.* (*tr.*)

bowing down, prostrating themselves, seeking grace from Allãh and pleasure; their marks are in their faces because of the effect of prostration; that is their description in the Torah and their description in the Injīl . . . (48:29). And this was the description of the Messenger of Allãh (s.a.w.a.) and of his companions in the Torah. Thereafter, when Allãh raised him up, the People of the Book recognized him. (But they rejected him) as Allãh, Great is His Majesty!, says: *but when there came to them that which they did recognize, they disbelieved in him* (2:89). (al-Qummi)

The author says: A similar *ḥadīth* has been narrated in *al-Kãfī* from 'Ali (a.s.).

Many Shiite traditions say that the words of Allãh, *wherever you are, Allãh will bring you all together,* has been revealed about the companions of al-Qã'im (a.s.). Some of those traditions say that it is applied to them according to the principle of the "flow of the Qur'ãn".

A tradition, narrated by the Sunni narrators says that 'Ali (a.s.) said about the words of Allãh, *so that I may complete My favour on you:* Completion of favour is the death in the state of Islam (i.e., to die as a Muslim)."

Another Sunni *ḥadīth* says that the completion of favour is entering into the Garden.

AN ACADEMIC AND HISTORICAL DISCOURSE ON WAYS OF FINDING THE DIRECTION OF *QIBLAH*

The Muslims have to face towards the *qiblah* in prayer – and it is an act of worship which each of them has to perform several times a day – and at the time of slaughtering an animal as well as at some other times. It compelled the Muslims to find out the direction of the *qiblah* wherever they might be.

In the beginning it was based on guess and rough estimates. Then the overwhelming need prompted the Muslim geographers and mathematicians to devise more accurate methods to find its direction. They based their reckoning on the longitude and

latitude of a place – they calculated the degree of inclination between its location and that of Mecca with the help of trigonometry and astronomy. They fixed the direction of *qiblah* in every town with the help of the well-known Indian Circle which fixed the meridian of a place and showed the degree of its inclination from the *qiblah.*

Then they started using the compass. Its hands pointed to the North and the South; and if the degree of inclination to Mecca was known beforehand, it was easy to fix the direction of the *qiblah.* It gradually replaced the Indian Circle, being a lot quicker and easier to use.

But both these endeavours of theirs – may Allãh reward them for these – were not free from defect and miscalculation.

First: The Indian Circle: The latter geographers found out that the early scholars were not very accurate in their calculation of the longitude – and this had led to confusion in calculation of the degree of inclination, and consequently in the fixing of the *qiblah's* direction. The early scholars were more accurate in finding the latitude of a place, than its longitude. They used to fix the latitude of a place by measuring the altitude of the North Pole there. But fixing a longitude depended on measuring the distance between two places, and it was done by noting the time when a certain celestial event, like a solar or lunar eclipse, occurred in one place, and then calculating as to how much time had elapsed before it appeared in the other place. Obviously, neither the old instruments were dependable enough, nor the means of communications fast enough, to give this calculation the desired accuracy.

With advancement of scientific apparatus and development of new means of communication, the need was felt to find a more accurate way of fixing the *qiblah.* The well-known scholar, Shaykh (Ḥaydar Quli) Sardãr Kãbulī – Allãh's mercy be on him! looked into this matter, and calculated the inclination of various places with the help of the modern sciences. He wrote on this subject his book *Tuḥfatu 'l-ajillah fī ma'rifati 'l-qiblah.* It is a fine work, in which he explains scientifically, how to find out the direction of *qiblah* for a place; also he has given charts fixing

the *qiblah* of various towns.

Allãh helped him in his endeavour - may He reward him for it - in such a fine way that his calculations showed a clear miracle of the Prophet.

When the early Muslim scholars calculated the position of Medina, they found that it was situated at 25°n lat. 75° 20′ long. The trouble was that *al-miḥrãb* (اَلمِحْرَابُ = niche) of the Mosque of the Prophet (based on the original direction) was not exactly to the direction which the newly calculated position was indicating. The religious scholars were always arguing on this subject, and they invented some reasons to justify that "deviation", although none was based on reality. But Sardãr Kãbuli - may Allãh have mercy on him! - showed clearly that Medina is situated on 24°57′ lat. 39°59′ long.; and that the inclination towards Mecca is 0°45′. And the niche of the Prophet's Mosque has exactly the same inclination. By this calculation, one more miracle of the Prophet came to light; it was the direction to which he turned his face while he was praying, and about which he later said that Jibrīl took hold of his hand and turned him towards the Ka'bah. Truth was what Allãh and His Messenger said.

After him, came the great mathematician, 'Abdu 'r-Razzãq al-Baghã'irī - Allãh's mercy be on him - and he calculated the direction of the *qiblah* of most of the towns of the world, and published it in his book; his charts fix the *qiblah* of more than 1,500 towns. In this way, the favour of Allãh was completed about the direction of the *qiblah.*

Second: The Compass: It has been established that the Earth's magnetic Poles are not identical with its geographical Poles. First of all, the magnetic Poles have been changing from time to time. Second, the magnetic North Pole is at a distance of about one thousand miles from the geographical North Pole. Obviously, the compass does not show the exact direction of the *qiblah;* in some places the deviation may reach a degree that cannot be allowed.

Now, the leading mathematician, Ḥusayn 'Ali Razm Ãrã, undertook these days (i.e., the 1332nd year of the solar hijri calendar) to solve this problem. He calculated the difference

between the magnetic and geographical Poles at various places, and determined the degrees of inclination of the *qiblah* from the magnetic Pole in respect of about one thousand towns. Then he invented his compass which fixes the *qiblah* of those places very accurately.

This compass is now in general use in the Muslim world. May Allãh reward him for his endeavours.

A SOCIOLOGICAL ESSAY ON THE MEANING OF *QIBLAH* AND ITS BENEFITS

Let us look at the social structure of humanity. Ponder on society *per se,* and you will admit that it was the human nature which brought it into being and developed it with its many-sided aspects. It did so because of the inspiration it received from Allãh – the divinely-gifted instinct which made a man realize that he depends on collective efforts of other men for his survival and development. That is why human beings rely on society and keep their activities within the bounds of the social laws.

Then he acquired knowledge – mental images – related to his surrounding matter, and about his own needs and activities. What creates a relation – positive or negative – between a man and his activities is the knowledge of their various properties; like the knowledge that something is good or bad, this should be done, that should be avoided. In fact, all the fundamental concepts of sociology come under this category. It covers leader-ship and subordination, ownership and jurisdiction, collective and individual affairs, and in short, all the common rules and values as well as the national or tribal traditions and customs. Even the last mentioned rites which change from nation to nation, from region to region and from era to era, have been produced by the human nature which worked according to the divinely-bestowed instinct.

All these exoteric aspects of society are symbols of esoteric ideas and ideals; human nature sees in them fulfilment of its inner craving, and thus moves towards it in appropriate way – by taking it, discarding it, doing it, leaving it or perfecting it.

Now, Allãh is free from matter and its concomitants; He can never be perceived by any physical sense. How can people turn towards Him, especially if they want their inner devotion manifested in their actions – because actions are confined within material limits. It can only be done by representing the esoteric ideas with manifest actions. Various feelings and emotions are represented with various appropriate physical postures: Man prostrates to show his self-abasement; and bows down to glorify the Creator. Circumambulation around the Ka‘bah represents self-sacrifice. Standing in prayer portrays the Creator's greatness, and *wuḍũ'* and ritual bath are intended to make one spiritually clean, to prepare oneself for Divine Presence.

Undoubtedly, complete attention towards God during the prayer is the soul of the worship. Without total undiverted attention worship has no life, no vitality. And the attention depends on such representations for its existence, continuation and perfection.

The worshippers of idols, celestial bodies or other material things (like trees, animals and/or human beings) stand face to face with their deities and idols, turning towards them with their bodies maintaining close proximity with them.* Islam came to verify the previous religions brought by the prophets; it is the most comprehensive and complete Divine Religion. It has appointed the Ka‘bah as the *qiblah* – the direction to which people should turn during prayer (and no one is excused from prayer in any condition) wherever they may be in the world. They are further obliged (or encouraged) to turn towards it in certain conditions, and forbidden to face it or keep it behind

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* But that method, invented by human mind, was rejected by Divine religions brought by the prophets of God, because instead of fixing the attention to God, it actually diverted the attention towards those idols etc., making them into partners of God in worship. Yet, the original aim – a physical manifestation of undiverted attention towards God – was good and in conformity with demands of the human nature, provided it could be achieved without any risk of falling into polytheism. (*tr.*)

their backs in some other conditions. Thus, a Muslim is obliged to keep his attention to the House of Allãh. He is not to forget his Lord in private or in public, in his working hours or in sleep, while standing up or sitting down in prayer, or in other actions – not even in his meanest condition.*

The above discourse looked at the benefits which an individual derives from the *qiblah.* If we ponder on this rule from sociological point of view, then its effects are even more import-ant and far-reaching. It has united all the Muslims – of diverse places and different times – fixing their attention to one point. The *qiblah,* therefore, portrays that they are one in their belief, connected to each other in their social structure, and brothers in Islam. If such a fine spirit permeates the material and ideological lives of the individuals and groups, the society shall reach its highest point of perfection; and the most comprehensive and all-encompassing unity shall manifest itself in the Muslim society. Allãh has especially bestowed this favour on His Muslim servants. By this favour He has protected their religious unity – even now when they have fallen apart in so many groups, have been divided into so many sects and are following so many diverse ideologies.

We are thankful to Allãh for His favours.

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* It is unlawful to face towards the *qiblah,* or to keep the *qiblah* on backside, while urinating or relieving the bowels. Therefore, a Muslim has to remember the direction of *qiblah* even at that time. (tr.)

* * * * *

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ ـ ١٥٢.

Therefore remember Me, I will remember you, and be thankful to Me, and do not be ungrateful to Me (152).

* * * * *

COMMENTARY

Allãh first mentioned His favour on the Muslims that He sent to them a Prophet from among them – a favour that cannot be measured in any way. Then he pointed to another great favour in that He guided them to the straight path and led them to the highest perfection. Then came the third favour of giving them a *qiblah* of their own – through that rule, their religion began its journey to perfection, their worship was unified and their religious and social virtues were enhanced. Reminding them of these three-fold favours, He calls them to remember Him and to be thankful to Him. They should remember Him with their devotion and obedience, so that He remembers them with His favour. He will increase for them His bounty and grace, if they are thankful to Him, and if they are not ungrateful for His favours. He had already said to them: *and remember your Lord when you forget and say: 'May be my Lord will guide me to a nearer course to the right than this"* (18:24) ; *If you are grateful, I would certainly give you more; and if you are ungrateful, My chastisement is truly severe* (14:7). These two verses were revealed before the verse of the *qiblah* in this chapter.

"adh-Dhikr" (اَلذِّكْرُ = remembrance) is sometimes used as opposite of "*al-ghaflah*" (اَلغَفْلَة = inattention and heedlessness). Allãh says: *and do not follow him whose heart We have made inattentive to Our remembrance* (18:28). Inattention is "not knowing that one knows – although the original knowledge is present in memory". "Remembrance", as its opposite, means "knowing that one knows".

The word "remembrance" at other times is used as opposite to "*an-nisyãn*" (اَلنِّسْيَانُ = forgetfulness). Forgetfulness is "cessation of knowledge from mind"; and as its opposite, remembrance means "presence of knowledge in mind". It is to this meaning that the words of Allãh refer in the verse: *and remember your Lord when you forget* . . . (18:24). This remembrance, like its opposite "forgetfulness", is a concept which has its own special effects and exclusive characteristics. Sometimes when those effects and characteristics are found, we say that one remembers, although there is no actual remembrance; or that one has forgotten, although there is no actual forgetfulness. For example, if you do not come to the aid of your friend – when you know that he needs your help – then people say that: "You have forgotten him", although in fact you remember him very well.

The word "remembrance" is also used in the same way. Apparently, the use of this word for "verbal remembrance" (e.g., reciting or repeating the names of Allãh) comes in this category, because you cannot express something in words unless you remember it in mind. Allãh says: *Say; "I will recite to you an account* (a remembrance) *of him"* (18:83). There are many other examples like it. But if verbal remembrance is counted as a real meaning of the word 'remembrance' then it will be one of its (lower) degrees.

However, remembrance is of many degrees. Allãh says: *now surely by Allãh's remembrance are the hearts set at rest* (13:28); *And remember your Lord within yourself humbly and fearing and in a voice not loud in the morning and the evening, and be not of the heedless ones* (7:205) ; *then remember Allãh as you remember your fathers, rather a more intense remembrance* (2:200). Now, it is the thought or feeling which becomes

intense, not the words. Also, we have quoted the above verse: *and remember your Lord when you forget and say: "May be my Lord will guide me to a nearer course to the right than this"* (18:24). The last sentence, beginning with *Say: "May be . . .",* tells the servant to hope for a rank higher than his present one. Its connotation will be as follows: If you slip down to a lower rank, that is, if you forget what you knew before, then remember your Lord and then you may hope for a higher rank that is nearer to the right course than the present one. It shows that the remembrance of the heart, *per se, is* of many degrees. It also proves the validity of the saying, "Remembrance is the presence of an idea in the mind"; because even "presence" has various degrees and ranks.

Remember Me: In this sentence, the object "Me" refers to Allãh. As we explained above, remembrance is the knowledge of knowledge; and knowledge is defined as "attainment of the form and idea of a thing in the mind of the Knower". Knowledge confines the thing so known and encompasses it within the knower's mind. Obviously, Allãh cannot be known, or remembered (i.e., known to be known) in any way like this. He is beyond the description of describers. He Himself says: *Hollowed be Allãh, from what they describe, except the servants of Allãh, freed* (from sins) (37:159–160); *they do not comprehend Him in knowledge* (20:110). (We shall write later on, Allãh willing, somethings related to these two verses.) In view of this established fact, if we were to say that the words, "Remember Me", have been used here in their real, and not metaphorical sense, then we will have to say that man has, or can have, a know-ledge whose definition would be quite different from the one known to us.

TRADITIONS

Numerous traditions, on the virtue of remembrance of Allãh, have been narrated by the Shi'ah and Sunni narrators. For example, it has been narrated through various chains of narrators that: "Remembrance of Allãh is good in all conditions."

It has been narrated that the Messenger of Allãh (s.a.w.a.) came up to his companions, and said: "Feast you in the meadows

of the Garden." They said: "O Messenger of Allãh! And what are the meadows of the Garden?" He said: "The gatherings of remembrance; go there in the mornings and in the evenings and remember (Allãh). And whoever likes to know (what is) his position near Allãh, he should see what is the position of Allãh near him (i.e., in his heart) ; because surely Allãh gives a servant the same position which the servant gives to Allãh, *vis-à-vis,* his own self. And know that your best deeds (near your King) and the purest and the highest of them in ranks, and the best of all that the sun shines on, is the remembrance of Allãh, the High, because Allãh, the High, has said concerning His Own Self: 'I am the companion of him who remembers Me'; and He, the High One, has said: *'Therefore remember Me; I will remember you* with My bounty; you remember Me with obedience and worship, I will remember you with bounties, and beneficence, and comfort, and (My) pleasure.' " (*'Uddatu' d-dã'ī*)

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said : "Surely Allãh, the Blessed, the High, says: 'Whoever is too preoccupied with My remembrance to be able to ask Me (for his needs), I give him the best of what I give to him who asks Me.' " (*al-Maḥãsin; ad-Da'awãt,* ar-Rãwandi)

al-Ḥusayn al-Bazzãz said: "Abu Abdillãh (a.s.) told me: 'Should I not tell you the most difficult (thing) which Allãh has made obligatory for His creatures?' I said: 'Yes, certainly.' He said: 'To do justice to the people (even) against yourself, and your beneficence to your brother, and remembrance of Allãh in every place. Why, (by remembrance) I do not mean (recitation of): "Glory be to Allãh, and praise be to Allãh, and there is no god except Allãh, and Allãh is Great" – although this is from that (i.e., it is one aspect of remembrance) ; but remembrance of Allãh in every place (means that you should remember Him) when you rush to His obedience or to His disobedience." (*Ma 'ãni 'l-akhbãr*)

The author says: This theme has been narrated through numerous chains from the Prophet and his *Ahlu 'l-bayt* (peace be on them all); and there is, in some of them, the following addition: "And it is the words of Allãh: *Surely those who fear*

(Allãh), *when a visitation from the Satan afflicts them they become mindful* (they remember), *then lo! they see."* (7:201)

The Prophet said: "Allãh says: 'When I know that the predominant trait of My servant is to be engrossed in Me, I transfer his desire to My invocation and My secret conversation. When My servant becomes like this (i.e., when he attains this position), then if he wants to (i.e., if he is about to) forget, I come between him and his forgetfulness (i.e., I protect him from it). They are truly My friends; they are truly the heroes; it is they that when I want to destroy the people of the earth in chastisement, I remove it (the chastisement) from them because of those heroes.' " (*'Uddatu 'd-dã'ī*)

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said: "Allãh, the High, has said: 'O son of Ãdam! Remember Me in your mind, I will remember you in My Self; O Son of Ãdam! Remember Me in seclusion, I will remember you in seclusion; remember Me in a gathering, I will remember you in a gathering better than your gathering.' " And he said: "No servant remembers Allãh in an assembly of the people but Allãh remembers him in the assembly of the angels". (*al-Maḥasin*)

The author says: Both groups, that is, the Shī'ah and the Sunnis, have narrated this theme with numerous *asnãd.*

aṣ-Ṣuyũṭī writes in *ad-Durru 'l-manthũr:* "aṭ-Ṭabarãnī, Ibn Marduwayh and al-Bayhaqi (in his *Shu'abu 'l-imãn*) have narrated from Ibn Mas'ũd that he said: 'The Messenger of Allãh said: "Whoever is given four (things) is (also) given (other) four (things). And its explanation is (found) in the Book of Allãh. Whoever is given remembrance, Allãh remembers him, because Allãh says, *'Remember Me, I will remember you';* and whoever is given *ad-du'ã'* (اَلدُّعَاءُ = invocation) is given response (i.e., its acceptance), because Allãh says; *'Call on Me, I will answer you';* and whoever is given thankfulness, is given increase, because Allãh says, *'If you are grateful, I will certainly give you more';* and whoever is given to ask forgiveness, is given pardon, because Allãh says, '*Ask forgiveness of your Lord, surely He is the most Forgiving.*' " ' "

It is written in the same book: "Sa'īd ibn Manṣũr, Ibnu '1-Mundhir and al-Bayhaqī (in his *Shu'abu '1-īmãn*) narrate from Khãlid ibn Abi 'Imrãn that he said that the Messenger of Allãh said: 'Whoever obeys Allãh, he indeed has remembered Allãh, even if his prayer and his fast and his recitation of the Qur'ãn are small in quantity. And whoever disobeys Allãh, he indeed has forgotten Allãh, even if his prayer and his fast and his recitation of the Qur'ãn are abundant.' "

The author says: This tradition indicates that man commits sin only when he forgets Allãh and becomes inattentive to Him. Had he remembered what was the reality behind his sin and what effect it would produce, he would not have gone near it. If someone disobeys Allãh – and does not care even if he is reminded of Him – and gives no importance to his Lord and Creator, then he is a transgressor (who) does not know the dignity and the sublime majesty of his Lord, nor does he understand how Allãh encompasses every thing. This theme is also found in another tradition, which has been narrated in *ad-Durru '1-manthũr* from Abũ Hind ad-Dãrī who said that the Prophet said: "Allãh says: 'Remember Me by obeying Me, I will remember you with My forgiveness. And whoever remembers Me – and he is obedient – then it is My duty to remember him with My forgiveness. And whoever remembers Me – and he is disobedient – then it is a right on Me to remember him with hate . . .' " The last sentence of this *ḥadīth* has used the word, remembrance (at the time of disobedience), in its opposite meaning; the verse under discussion and other traditions used the word 'forgetfulness' to convey that same idea.

We shall give some more details of this subject in some other place.

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يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلٰوةِ إِنَّ اللهَ مَعَ
الصَّابِرِينَ — ١٥٣. وَلاَ تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ يُقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللهِ أَمْوَاتٌ بَلْ
أَحْيَاءٌ وَلٰكِنْ لاَ تَشْعُرُونَ — ١٥٤. وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِنَ الْخَوْفِ
وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِنَ الأَمْوَالِ وَالأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ — ١٥٥.
الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ — ١٥٦.
أُولٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأُولٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ — ١٥٧.

O you who believe! seek assistance through patience and prayer; surely Allãh is with the patient ones (153). *And do not speak of those who are slain in Allãh's way as dead; nay,* (they are) *alive, but you do not perceive* (154). *And We will most certainly try you with somewhat of fear and hunger and loss of property and lives and fruits; and give good news to the patient ones* (155), *who, when a misfortune befalls them, say: "Surely we are Allãh's and to Him we shall surely return"* (156). *Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those are the followers of the right course* (157).

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GENERAL COMMENT

A single theme joins the five verses like a pearl-string; the sentences form a sequence and the topic is developed harmoniously; the beginning leads to the end, and the points

to the beginning. It shows that they were revealed together, not separately. The context indicates that they must have been revealed shortly before the law of *al-jihãd* (اَلجِهَادُ = war in the way of Allãh) was promulgated and the Muslims were ordered to fight in the cause of religion.

The verses prepare the believers for some trials which they will have to undergo, some misfortunes which will befall them. Not the usual type of trial and hardship, but some extraordinary misfortunes which will afflict the whole community and will continue, recurring every now and then. Man, like any other creature in this world, always faces some hardships and troubles which disturb and disrupt the pattern of his personal life. Death, sickness, fear, hunger, grief, poverty and deprivation are but a few examples of such personal misfortunes. It is the course which Allãh has laid down for His servants. This world is a place of struggle and competition; the life is a chain of never ending changes and transformations. *And you shall not find any alteration in the course of Allãh; and you shall not find any change in the course of Allãh* (35:43).

Although personal afflictions and misfortunes are hard to bear for the man so affected, yet they are not as crushing, bewildering and frightening as those which affect the whole community. When an individual is afflicted by a misfortune, he seeks help of others, complementing his own wisdom, determination and steadiness with those of his relatives, friends and compatriots. But when a misfortune or hardship afflicts the whole community, it stuns them all; it numbs their minds, and clouds their vision; it looks as if the whole society has lost its collective wisdom. It disrupts not only the individual, but even the collective life. Fear terrorizes, panic overwhelms, and minds boggle down; courage deserts and dread reigns supreme. A collective misfortune is, in short, much more harder to bear and much more bitter in taste. And it is these that the verse point to.

But not every collective affliction, like epidemic or femine. What the verses describe is in all-encompassing affliction which shall be brought about as a consequence of the believers' faith

itself. They have accepted the belief of monotheism; they have answered the call of the truth. The whole world and especially their own kith and kin are united against them. The enemies are trying, with all the forces at their command, to extinguish the light of Allãh, to erase the word of justice, to nullify the call of truth. The conflict has reached a stage where both parties realize that fighting is the only way out. Both parties have exhausted all other resources they had. The unbelievers first had tried to achieve their goal by arguments and mischief mongering, by whispering campaigns and unsettling rumours. But all was in vain. All their endeavours failed to give them any satisfaction – they did not harm the Muslims in the way they wanted. Now, from their point of view, nothing was left but to wage war against the Muslims and to annihilate them. Only then, the path of truth could be blocked and the bright light of Islam extinguished.

As from the believers' point of view, only the fighting could now help there in their endeavour to propagate the creed of monotheism, to spread the true religion and just rule, to cut at the root of falsehood. The past experience has proved that truth gains strength only when falsehood is removed – and now it cannot be removed except by force.

In short, the verses indicate that the great trial is near at hand – it mentions martyrdom in the way of Allãh, and praises it laudably, saying that it is not a death, it is life – and what a life indeed! Accordingly death in the way of Allãh is a distinction which is desirable – not a thing to dislike or fear.

The verses encourage the believers to fight for Islam. They are told that there is coming to them a trial, a hardship. Only if they bear it patiently, they shall reach the high ranks of spiritual perfection, receiving the blessings and mercy of Allãh, and being guided aright by Divine Guidance. Also, it tells them how they may get help in bearing those burdens – they should seek assistance through patience and prayer. Patience will protect them from fear and anguish, and will save their plans from disruption. As for prayer, it will turn their attention to their Lord, and will help them in putting all their affairs in the hands of the Almighty Allãh, because all power belongs to Him.

COMMENTARY

QUR'ÃN: *O you who believe! seek assistance through patience and prayer; surely Allãh is with the patient ones:* We have explained briefly about patience and prayer, under the verse: *And seek assistance through patience and prayer; and most surely it is a hard thing except for the humble ones* (2:45). Patience is one of the most important characteristics, which the Qur'ãn praises very highly. It repeatedly tells the believers to be patient – there are about seventy verses on this theme. It praises it in such laud-able ways as: . . *and bear patiently that which befalls you; surely it is of the acts which require determination* (31:17) ; *And none are made to receive it but those who are patient, and none are made to receive it but those who have a mighty good fortune* (41: 35) *; only the patient will be paid back their reward in full without measure* (39:10).

Likewise, prayer is one of the greatest acts of worship and devotion which the Qur'ãn always exhorts the believers to do. It has been praised in these words: *surely prayer keeps* (one) *away from indecency and evil* (29:45). Wherever Allãh exhorts the people to some good deeds, prayer is always placed at the head of the list.

Then Allãh praises patience that Allãh is with those who have got this virtue: In this respect this verse differs from the verse *2:45* which had focused attention on prayer; *and most surely it is a hard thing except for the humble ones.* But this verse singles out the patience, because here the talk is about facing the difficulties and fighting against the enemies; and in this context patience acquires a greater importance. Surely Allãh is with the patient ones. It is a special proximity unlike the company mentioned in the verse: *and He is with you wherever you are* (13 :4). This latter verse says that Allãh controls your affairs and His knowledge encompasses you; while the verse under discussion means that Allãh helps and aids the patient ones. Patience, therefore, is the key to get relief from distress.

QUR'ÃN: *And do not speak of those who are slain in Allah's*

way as dead; nay, (they are) *alive, but you do not perceive:* Some exegetes have said that when the verse says that the martyrs are alive, it actually means that their good names will continue for ever and their heroism will always be remembered with gratitude. Their argument is as follows:

"The verse is addressed to the Muslims, who already believe in Allãh, His Messenger and the Day of Judgment; they are also sure of the life hereafter. They have accepted the call of truth, and have already heard a lot of verses which speak of the Resurrection. They know that a man's life does not end with death. How could they speak of the martyrs as dead? Moreover, this verse affirms only about the martyrs that they are alive; and describes it as their especial excellence *vis-à-vis* other believers and the unbelievers. But we know that life after death is not confined to one group, it is a general phenomenon, which covers the whole mankind. Therefore, the life mentioned here must be something special, which is reserved for those who are slain in the way of Allãh – and that is their eternal name and ever-lasting fame."

But this interpretation is unacceptable, because of the following reasons:

First: The life which they have mentioned is not real life; it is an imaginary thing, which has no relation with reality. Such unreal and imaginary things do not deserve to be included in Divine Speech. Allãh calls to reality, to truth; and says: *and what is there after the truth but error?* (10:32). Of course, Ibrãhīm (a.s.) had prayed to Allãh: *And make for me a truthful tongue among the posterity* (26:84). But what he meant by "a truthful tongue" was continuation of his true mission after him; he did not mean only that his good name be remembered and his praise be sung by coming generations.

Of course, such imaginary exegesis, such false interpretation is more in line with materialists' thinking. They believe that soul is a material thing, life is a development of matter; once a man dies the life comes to an end, there is nothing to continue after death; as such, there is no life hereafter. But applying that idea to sociology, they encountered a great difficulty:

The fact is that man by nature believes in continuation of life after death, his instinct tells him that there is happiness and unhappiness in the other world where he goes after death; and if he wants to enjoy happiness there, he will have to sacrifice many comforts of this life. This is specially true about great affairs and ideals which cannot be established except when their supporters and adherents are willing to die for them, to sacrifice their lives for the cause. They have to die so that others may live.

Now, the dilemma of the atheists and materialists was this: If death is the end of life, if man, after his death, is lost for ever, then why should he sacrifice his life so that others may live? Why should he deprive himself of the comforts and enjoyments which he can easily get through injustice and tyranny? Just to let others live in peace? What has he got to gain by his sacrifice? Nothing. No sensible man gives something if he is not getting something in return. Human nature rejects the concept of giving without receiving, of leaving something without getting something in exchange. It rejects the idea of dying to enable others to live, the notion of denying oneself the enjoyment of this short life so that others may enjoy it.

When the materialists realized the trouble they were in, they tried to make up this shortcoming by inventing these imaginary gains which had no existence except in their own minds. They said: A man, emancipated from fetters of superstitions and myths, must sacrifice his life for his country and for other noble goals; this sacrifice will make him immortal because his good name and widespread fame will remain alive for ever. Likewise, he should deny himself some enjoyments of life so that others may benefit from those things. In this way, society and civilization will remain on right track and the social justice will reign supreme. And that man, because of his sacrifice, will get a noble and sublime life. Would that I knew who will enjoy that noble life when the man himself is dead, when his physical body has perished, and with it have gone all traces of life including perceptions and feelings? Who will then feel and enjoy that "noble life"? Isn't it just a delirious raving?

Second: The last phrase of the verse, " but you do not perceive," does not agree with that explanation. If that was the meaning of "life", Allãh should have said: nay, they are alive because their good name will remain for ever, and people will always sing their praises generation after generation. Obviously, such description would have proved much more satisfying and encouraging, and would have cheered them up to a greater degree than the phrase, "but you do not perceive".

Third: A similar verse – which in a way also explains it – describes the promised life in such a way as not to allow that interpretation: *And reckon not those who are killed in Allãh's way as dead; nay, they are alive* (and) *are provided sustenance from their Lord; Rejoicing in what Allãh has given them out of His grace, and they rejoice for the sake of those who,* (being left) *behind them have not yet joined them, that they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. They rejoice on account of favour from Allãh and* (*His*) *grace, and that Allãh will not waste the reward of the believers* (3:169-171). Clearly, it is a description of a real, not imaginary, life.

Fourth: It is not difficult to accept that some Muslims, in the middle of the Prophet's era, were unaware of the life after death. What was very clearly mentioned in the Qur'ãn was the Resurrection on the Day of Judgment. But so far as the life of *al-barzakh* (اَلبَرْزَخُ = the period between death and the Day of Judgment) is concerned, it has been described in the Qur'ãn, but not so clearly as not to leave any room for ambiguity. That is why not all the Muslims are agreed on this subject – even today some of them do not accept it. (These are those who believe that soul is not immaterial; that man perishes on death; and Allãh will raise him again for judging him on the Day of Judgment.) This verse, therefore, could have been revealed to affirm that the martyrs were alive in *al-barzakh.* May be, there were some believers who were not aware of it, even if others knew it.

In short, the verse speaks of a real, not imaginary, life. Allãh, in several places, has counted the life of an unbeliever after his death as a destruction and perdition. For example: . . . *and* (they)

made their people to alight into the abode of perdition (14:28). So, it is the life of bliss that is true life, and it is only the believers who will live that life, as Allãh says: *and as for the next abode, that most surely is the life – did they but know* (29:64). They did not know it because their senses could perceive only the material aspects of this world's life. As they did not perceive what was beyond their limited perception, they could not differentiate between extinction and life after death. They thought that there was nothing after death but extinction. That delusion, that conjecture was common to believers and unbelievers alike. That is why Allãh said: "nay, (they are) alive, but you do not perceive," that is, by your senses. The same is the import of the last phrase in the verse: *that most surely is the life – did they but know* (29:64), that is, with certainty, as He says in the verse: *Nay! if you had known with a knowledge of certainty, you should most certainly have seen the hell* (102:5–6).

The meaning of the verse, then, is as follows – and Allãh knows better! And do not say about those who are slain in the way of Allãh that they are dead. You should not think that they have become extinct, have perished. Of course, you generally think that death is extinction; in your language death is used as opposite of life; and this delusion is supported by your senses. But it is not correct. The martyrs are not dead, in that they are not extinct; they are alive although you do not perceive that life by your senses, by your perceptions.

This talk was addressed to the believers, although majority of them – if not all – knew that man's life continues after his death. It was done to draw their attention to a fact known to them. The aim was to cheer them up by reminding them of this reality, in order that they should not grieve, should not be perturbed, should not loose their hearts, when death faces them or their dear ones in the way of Allãh. The only thing that the relatives would be afflicted with, in such cases, is separation from their martyr for a few days, as long as they themselves are alive in this world. And this temporary separation is not a big problem – especially if compared to the pleasure of Allãh, and to the bounties bestowed on the martyr, like the pleasant life and everlasting grace. And the

pleasure of Allãh is the greatest bounty and bliss. In this respect, the verse is not unlike the previously explained one where Allãh tells His Prophet: *The truth is from your Lord, therefore you should not be of the doubters* (2:147). We know that the Prophet was the first and foremost of those who were sure of the Divine signs and communications. Yet he was told not to be of the doubters. This mode is generally used to show that the subject is so clear, so well-known and so well established that there is no room for any conflicting thought to come into mind.

THE LIFE OF *AL-BARZAKH*

This verse clearly proves that man remains alive in *al-barzakh* (اَلبَرْزَخُ = the period between one's death and the Day of Resurrection). The same is the import of the other verse on this subject: *And reckon not those who are killed in Allãh's way as dead; nay, they are alive* (and) *are provided sustenance from their Lord* (3:169). Many other verses prove this reality and we shall mention some of them at the end of this essay.

A very strange interpretation has been given to this verse by some people. They say that it was revealed about the martyrs of Badr, and therefore it is reserved exclusively for those martyrs; it cannot be applied to others who are slain in the way of Allãh.

A scholar has made an interesting comment on this explanation. Writing about the preceding verse, "seek assistance through patience and prayer," he prays to Allãh to give him patience and forbearance to suffer such interpretations!

Would that I knew what do they mean by that explanation. On one hand, they say that man perishes after death or murder; when his body disintegrates, he becomes extinct. If so, then how could the martyrs of Badr remain alive after being slain? Was it as a miracle? Was it because Allãh had given them a distinction and excellence, which was denied to all the prophets, messengers and friends of Allãh, not expecting even the Holy Prophet of Islam? If there is no life after death, then keeping them alive after their martyrdom is not a miracle – it is an impossibility.

And a miracle does not cover an impossible thing. If it is asserted that such a self-evident preposition was negated for those martyrs, then no confidence can be put in any self-evident truth – let alone other principles.

Or, do they mean that people's perceptions were mistaken about the condition of those martyrs? The martyrs were alive, were getting sustenance from their Lord, were eating, drinking and enjoying all the comforts of life – far away from the range of people's perceptions. And what the people had seen and perceived with their senses – that the martyrs were killed, their bodies mutilated, their senses gone, and their physique disintegrated – was just a delusion, and nothing of this sort had happened in reality. If this is what they mean, if people's senses could be so deluded – perceiving correctly in one case and wrongly in another, without any differentiating cause – then no trust can be put in any of the senses at all. Then, may be, we will perceive a non-existent as existing and an existing thing as non-existent. How can a sensible person speak like that? It is nothing but sophistry.

However, that explanation somewhat follows the line adopted by a large group of the scholars of traditions. The latter believe that the things mentioned in the Qur'ãn and traditions, which are beyond our perception – like angels and souls of believers and other such things – are material and physical. They are ethereal bodies which may enter and penetrate dense and solid bodies, appearing thus in the form of man, for example, doing all that humans do; they possess powers and properties like ours, except that they are not governed by physical laws: they do not suffer any change or alteration, nor any composition or disintegration; they are not subject to natural life and death. When Allãh wants them to appear, they manifest themselves to our senses; and when He does not want so, or wants them not to appear, they do not appear. It depends entirely on a special will of Allãh; there is nothing in their senses, or in their "bodies", to tip the scale on this side or that.

Such an idea is based on rejection of the system of causeand-effect in the world. If such assertions were true, then all the

intellectual realities, all the academic principles, will be null and void – not to speak of the fundamentals of religion. Even those "sublime ethereal bodies" (which are supposedly beyond the reach of cause-and-effect) will be negated.

The above description, however, proves that the verse speaks about the life of *al-barzakh;* it is also called the world of the grave, the period between one's death and the Day of Resurrection; it is the world where the dead person is rewarded or punished until the Day of Resurrection.

Some other verses speaking about *al-barzakh* are as follows:

1. There are the three verses already quoted: *And reckon not those who are killed in Allãh's way as dead; nay, they are alive* (and) *are provided sustenance from their Lord; Rejoicing in what Allãh has given them out of His grace, and they rejoice for the sake of those who,* (being left) *behind them, have not yet joined them, that they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. They rejoice on account of favour from Allãh and* (*His*) *grace, and that Allãh will not waste the reward of the believers* (3:169 – 171). We have already shown how these verses, being similar to the one under discussion, prove the life of *al-barzakh.* Those who think that these verses were revealed exclusively for the martyrs of Badr, should ponder on the wordings of these three, because they indicate that not only the martyrs but also other believers enjoy the life after death, and rejoice by favour and grace of Allãh bestowed on them.

2. *Until when death overtakes one of them, he says: "Send me back, my Lord, send me back: Haply I may do good in that which I have left." By no means! it is a* (mere) *word that he speaks; and before them is al-barzakh until the day they are reaised* (23:99 – 100). It very clearly shows that there is an intermediate life between this world's and the one which they will live after the Resurrection. Further explanation will be given when we shall write about this verse, Allãh willing.

3. *And those who do not hope for Our meeting, say: "Why have not angels been sent down upon us, or* (*why*) *do we not see our Lord?" Now certainly they are too proud of themselves and have revolted a great revolt. On the day when they shall see the*

angels; (clearly it refers to the time when they will see the angels for the first time, that is, the time of death – as is described in many other verses;) *there shall be no joy on that day for the guilty, and they shall say: "It is a forbidden thing totally prohibited; And We shall proceed to what they have done of deeds, so We shall render them as scattered floating dust. The dwellers of the garden shall on that day be in a better abiding place and a better resting place. And on the day when the heaven shall burst asunder with the clouds;* (now it speaks about the Day of Resurrection;) *and the angels shall be sent down a sending. The kingdom on that day shall rightly belong to the Beneficent God, and a hard day shall it be for the unbelievers* (25:21–26). It very clearly proves the life of *al-barzakh.* Further details will be given in its proper place, Allãh willing.

4. *They shall say: "Our Lord! twice didst Thou give us death, and twice hast Thou given us life, so we do confess our faults; is there then a way to get out?"* (40:11). They will say it on the Day of Resurrection. It means that by that time there would be two deaths and two lives. It can be explained only if we accept the life and death of *al-barzakh.* Otherwise, there shall be only one death between this life and that of the Day of Resurrection. We have explained it to some extent under the verse: *How do you deny Allãh and you were dead and He gave you life? Again He will cause you to die and again bring you to life; then you shall be brought back to Him* (2:28).

5. . . . *and the most evil punishment overtook Pharaoh's people: The Fire, they are brought before it* (every) *morning and evening; and on the day when the hour shall come to pass: Make Pharaoh's people enter the severest chastisement* (40:46). It is known that the Day of Resurrection shall have no morning or evening. Clearly, *the day when the hour shall come to pass,* that is, the Day of Resurrection is other than the day of *al-barzakh* which has the mornings and evenings.

There are many other verses which indicate, or from which we may infer, this reality. For example: *By Allãh, most certainly We sent* (messengers) *to nations before, but the Satan made their deeds fair-seeming to them, so he is their guardian today,*

and they shall have a painful punishment (16 :63).

THE IMMATERIALITY OF THE SOUL

The verse under discussion, as well as those quoted above, points to another more comprehensive reality and that is the immateriality of the soul. The soul is something other than matter and body; it is beyond the jurisdiction of the rules governing matter and body, or those affecting various material compounds and mixtures. Yet, it has a special relationship with the body – keeping it alive, managing its multifarious functions and activities and enabling it to perceive and feel. Ponder on the earlier quoted verses and you will see this reality. The verses imply that man, *per se, is* not the body; he does not die when the body dies, he does not perish when the body perishes. The body disintegrates, its parts are scattered, but the "man" continues. Even after the death of his body, he continues to live, either in eternal bliss and everlasting felicity and grace, or in never ending misery and painful chastisement. That bliss or misery is based on his traits, trends, characteristics and actions, which he had acquired and done in this world's life – not in his bodily accomplishments or social achievements.

These themes are understood from the above-mentioned verses. Obviously, these traits are totally different from those of the body, and are diametrically opposed to worldly and material characteristics. Thus, the human soul is different from his body.

Also, the verse 39:42 points to this fact: *Allãh takes completely the souls at the time of their death, and those that die not during their sleep; then He withholds those on whom He has passed the decree of death and sends the other back till an appointed term.* *"at-Tawaffiyy"* (اَلتَّوَفِّيّ) and *"al-iṣṭīfã'* (اَلإِصْطِفَآءُ) both have the same meaning – to take and realize one's right fully and completely. The words used here in reference to the soul – "takes", "withholds" and "sends back" – clearly prove that the soul is something different from the body.

Another verse: *And they say: "What! when we have become lost in the earth, shall we then indeed be in a new creation?"*

Nay! they are disbelievers in the meeting of their Lord. Say: "The angel of death who is given charge of you shall take you completely, then to your Lord you shall be brought back" (32:10 – 11). In this verse, Allãh mentions one of the misgivings of those who do not believe in the Resurrection; and then tells His Messenger how to clear their doubt. They said: When we die, our body disintegrates, our limbs and organs are destroyed, nothing remains of our original form, and all our parts are scattered here and there in the earth. No one can then perceive us nor can anyone feel us. How is it possible for us, after such a total destruction, to be created a second time? This doubt is based on a feeling of improbability. Allãh shows the Messenger (s.a.w.a.) how to remove that misgiving: *Say: "The angel of death. . . be brought back."* There is an angel who has been given charge of you; he shall take you completely; he will not let you be lost, as you shall be under his protection, his control; what is lost in the earth is your body, not your soul or person (the reality which is referred to by the word "you"), because the angel of death shall take "you" completely.

One more verse: Allãh says, mentioning the creation of man: *Then He made him complete and breathed into him of His spirit* . . . (32:9). Read it in conjunction with the verse: *And they ask you about the soul. Say: "The soul is from the command of my Lord"* (17:85). The soul, therefore, is from the command of Allãh, and that command has been explained and defined in these words: *His command, when He intends anything is only that He says to it: "Be", and it is. Therefore, glory be to Him in Whose hand is the kingdom of everything.. .* (36:82 – 83). The soul is from the kingdom and it is the word, "Be". In another place, the command is further explained in these words: *And Our command is but one, as the twinkling of an eye* (54:50). The phrase, *as the twinkling of an eye,* shows that the command, that is, the word "Be", is an instantaneous, not a gradual, being. It comes into being at once, and is not bound with the chain of time and space.

It is thus evident that the command including the soul – is different from body, is something immaterial. We know

that the material things come into being gradually and are fettered with time and space. Obviously, the human soul is not a material thing and is different from the body, although it has a special relationship with the body.

There are some verses which show the nature of that relationship. Allãh says: *From it* (the earth) *We created you . . .* (20:55) ; *He created man from dry clay like earthen vessels . . .* (55 :14) ; *. . . and He began the creation of man from dust, then He made his progeny from an extract of water held in light estimation* (32:7 – 8); *And certainly We created man of an extract of clay, then We made him a small life-germ in a firm resting place, then We made the life-germ a clot, then We made the clot a lump of flesh, then We made* (in) *the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then We caused it to grow into another creation; so blessed be Allãh, the best of creators* (23:12 – 14).

The verses show that man, in the beginning was but a material body, changing into various forms; then Allãh made that body into another creation – a creation that has got perception and feeling; now he perceives and wills, thinks and acts according to his thoughts and ideas; he manages and manipulates the things around him as he likes. These activities and authority are beyond the power of body and matter. Obviously, neither of these activities emanate from body and matter nor does their doer.

We may say that the soul has the same relation to the body – from which it emanates – as a fruit has to its tree, or a lamp flame has to its oil. But these similes are a bit far-fetched. How-ever, these illustrations serve to show the nature of the relation between the soul and the body – how it is attached to the body in the beginning and how that connection is severed on death.

In short, the soul, in the beginning, is the body itself, then it grows into another creation, and lastly it becomes completely independent and separate from the body on death. These facts are understood from the above-mentioned Qur'ãnic verses; there are many other verses which allude to and imply this reality, and one may find them on reading the Qur'ãn with open eyes. And Allãh is the Guide.

QUR'ÃN: *And We will most certainly try you with somewhat of fear and hunger and loss of property and lives and fruits:* Allãh told them to seek assistance through patience and prayer and forbade them to say about those who are slain in His way that they are dead because those martyrs were in fact alive. Now, He explains why He has informed them of these realities. It is because the believers were soon to be tried and tested by fighting in the way of Allãh. It was by *al-jihãd* that they would reach the pinnacle of their virtues; their noble lives would not be worth living except with *al-jihãd.* The upright religion could not gain strength but with fighting. And while engaged in fighting, their efforts would not be crowned with success unless they were helped by those two helpers, that is, patience and prayer, and were further strengthened by a third factor, that is, the belief that their martyr is neither dead nor lost, and that their endeavours with their wealth and souls is neither forfeited nor fruitless. If they kill their enemy, they will remain alive while their enemy is destroyed; in this way they would be safe from the rule of injustice and false-hood which the enemy wanted to impose on them. And if they are killed in this endeavour, again they will remain alive for ever and equally safe from that unjust and wrong rule. In either case, they shall enjoy one of the two most excellent things.

Generally, the afflictions consist of fear, hunger and loss of properties and lives. As for the loss of fruits, apparently it means loss of children. When fighting occurs, its most telling result is not the loss of fruits but that of progeny, as the men and especially the youths are killed.

Some exegetes have said that the word "fruits" refers to the dates, and the "property" to other possessions, for example, camels, goats and sheep.

QUR'ÃN: *and give good news to the patient ones who, when a misfortunate befalls them, say: "Surely we are Allãh's and to Him we shall surely return". Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those are the followers of the right course:* The patient ones are again mentioned in these verses so that Allãh may give them good news to begin with,

and then may teach them the way of good patience, and thirdly, may explain to them why patience is essential – it is because Allãh owns the man – and fourthly, may declare what is its overall recompense, that is, blessing, mercy and being guided aright.

Allãh first told His Prophet to give them good news; but did not disclose what was that good news about. This was to show the greatness of the subject matter – it is from Allãh, therefore, it must be about something specially good, great and beautiful. Moreover, it is something which Allãh Himself has guaranteed.

Thereafter, He said that the patient ones are those who say these words when misfortune befalls them. *"al-Muṣībah"* (اَلْمُصِيْبَةُ = translated here as misfortune) is any happening that occurs to a man; but it is always used for a distressing happening. "Who . . . say: 'Surely we are Allãh's . . .' ": The word "say" as used here does not mean mere utterance of the sentence with-out keeping its meaning in mind. Even understanding its meaning is not sufficient, unless one penetrates to the depth of its reality. And that is that man is owned by Allãh – in real ownership – and that he is surely to return to Allãh, his Master. If this feeling takes deep root in his heart, the man will observe the highest degree of patience; sorrow, fear and anguish will be totally eradicated, and the rust of heedlessness will be removed from the heart. How?

Man and all his faculties, actions and other concomitants of existence, are there because of Allãh. He is his Creator and Originator. Man exists because of Allãh, and is dependent on Him in all his affairs and conditions. He does not have any existence or continuity independent of Allãh. The Master has the right to manage His slave's affairs in any way He likes; the slave has no authority whatsoever in his own affairs, because he has no independence at all. Allãh owns him; He is the real Owner of man's existence, faculties and actions.

Then Allãh allowed man to ascribe his "self" to himself as a property is ascribed to its owner. That is why it is said that "man has existence". In the same way, He permitted him to ascribe his faculties and actions to himself. Accordingly, it is

said that "man has faculties like hearing and sight", or "he does some actions like: walking, speaking, eating and hearing". Without the Divine permission neither man nor anything else could "own" any such ascription or attribution, because nothing exists without the Divine permission, or independent of Allãh's will.

Allãh has also informed us that ultimately all things will revert to their original status – the state before Allãh allowed them to be attributed to one or the other creature – and then no ownership will remain there except that of Allãh, as He says: *To whom belongs the kingdom this day? To Allãh, the One, the Subduer* (of all) (40:16). It shows that man – together with all that "belongs" to him or is with him – is to return to Allãh.

In short, there is a "real" ownership; it is reserved for Allãh, nobody – be he a man or something else – shares it with Him. And there is an "apparent" ownership, for example, man "owns" his own "self" as well as his children and properties etc. But the real ownership is of Allãh, and man owns them in form and appearance only – and that also because Allãh has allowed such attribution. Thus, when man rememebers the reality of Divine ownership, and then looks at his own "self", he knows that he is wholly and totally owned by Allãh. Then, he realizes that his "apparent" ownership – of his "self" as well as of his children and properties, etc. – will soon cease to exist, will become null and void; it will return to his Lord. Then, he will understand that ultimately he owns nothing, either in reality or in appearance. In this back-ground, there is no reason why he should grieve if he is afflicted with some misfortune. One may be affected only by something which one owns – feeling happiness when it is found or sorrow if it is lost. But when he believes that he owns nothing, he shall not be affected by finding it or losing it. How can he be afflicted by any loss when he believes that Allãh is the real Owner of every-thing, and He may manage His property in any way He likes?

THE ETHICS

The ethics entail betterment of morals and psychic traits – both in theory and practice. Man acquires the good morals and

removes the evil traits by repeatedly doing good – and relevant – deeds, and their continuous observance. Repeated and continuous performance of an action etches its particular knowledge on the psyche. Gradually, a picture is engraved on the mind which becomes impossible – or extremely difficult – to erase. Habits become second nature. For example, if a man wants to remove the trait of cowardice and acquire that of bravery, he should repeatedly plunge himself into difficulties and dangers. When-ever he would rush into a perilous and hazardous situation and finds himself coming out unscathed, he would acquire the taste of boldness and courage; and would understand the ignominy of flight, of taking to one's heels. Every such bold step would leave its mark on his psyche and ultimately bravery and courage would become an integral part of his character. Man has no power to acquire such traits by his own will; yet it may be counted as within his power inasmuch as its preliminary steps – those repeatedly performed deeds – emanate from his will and power.

There are two universally recognized systems to acquire high moral standards and noble manners.

First System: Many people base their moral science on good worldly foundations, that is, the knowledge, ideas and ideals which are thought praiseworthy and laudable in the society. They acquire a good trait because it is commendable in the eyes of the people. Chastity, contentedness with what is in one's hand and not looking at what others have – all these virtues create respect and honour in the people's eyes, and one's standing is enhanced in public. Avarice results in poverty and privation. Greed destroys one's prestige. Knowledge attracts people and bestows respect and dignity in the eyes of elite; it opens the eyes of the knowledgeable person, and protects him from unpleasant things. Ignorance, on the other hand, is blindness. Knowledge protects you while riches need your protection. Bravery makes you stead-fast and saves you from fickleness; this in its turn makes people sing your praise – no matter whether you win or lose. Cowardness and rashness both cause opposite effect. Justice gives peace of mind, and keep man alive even after his death inasmuch as his good name continues and his

love pulsates in people's hearts generation after generation.

This is the well-known basis on which the moral science is founded. Ancients like Greek philosophers followed this very system.

The Qur'ãn does not endorse this system, because it depends on the like and the dislike of the public. It looks at what is good in the eyes of the people and what is bad – and accepts the former and rejects the latter. Even in a few verses where the Qur'ãn appears to use this method, it really refers to the next world's reward or punishment. Ponder, for example, on the following verses:-

. . . and wherever you are, turn your faces towards it, so that people shall have no argument against you . . . (2:150). Here Allãh exhorts the Muslims to remain steadfast and firm, and for its reason, He says: "so that people shall have no argument against you".

. . . and do not quarrel, for then you will be weak in hearts and your power will depart, and be patient . . . (8:46). Allãh tells the believers to be patient, as impatience and quarrelling among themselves would weaken their hearts, dilute their power and embolden their enemy.

And whoever is patient and forgiving, that most surely is an act of great resolution (42:43). Here Allãh invites the believers to patience and forgiveness and explains its reason in terms of determination and resolution.

Second System: The second system is to keep in sight the other worldly goals. Allãh has used it in many verses of the Qur'ãn:

> *Surely Allãh has bought of the believers their persons and their properties for this, that they shall have the garden. . .* (9:111)
>
> *. . . only the patient ones will be paid back their reward in full without measure.* (39:10)
>
> *. . . surely it is the unjust that shall have a painful punishment.* (14:22)
>
> *Allãh is the Guardian of those who believe; He brings them out of the darkness into the light; and* (as to) *those who*

disbelieve, their guardians are the rebels, they take them out of the light into the darkness. . . (2:257)

There are many verses, on different subjects, which imply the same theme.

We may add here another set of the verses. For example, *No misfortune befalls on the earth nor in your own souls, but it is in a book before We bring it into existence; surely that is easy to Allãh* (57:22). This verse exhorts man not to feel any sorrow (or joy) on whatever misfortune (or good thing) comes to him; what has come to him, could not be averted, and what-ever has been lost could not be obtained, because all happenings occur by a firm Divine Decree which is unavoidable. Sorrow and joy both seem, in this background, meaningless – a believer should not indulge in these vain practices because he believes in Allãh and knows that all affairs are in His hands. Allãh says: *No affliction comes about but by Allãh's permission; and whoever believes in Allãh, He guides aright his heart* (64:11). Such verses, like the earlier quoted ones, create high morals by pointing to the sublime goals of the next world. These other worldly goals are real, not imaginary, perfections. These verses reform the human character by fixing man's attention to the real already existing causes like the Divine measure and decree, adoptation of the Divine characteristics and remembrance of the good names of Allãh and His sublime attributes.

Question: Belief in causality of such things as the Divine measure and decree negates the rules governing this life in which we have been given freedom of will and power. This, in its turn, nullifies the noble morals and disturbs the system of this physical world. If man may rely, in acquiring such good traits as patience and steadfastness, and in refraining from sorrow and joy, on the fact that all things to happen are already firmly decreed and written in the "preserved tablet", then the same argument may be used if one does not endeavour to earn one's livelihood, to acquire good characteristics, or to refrain from bad habits. He will sit idle not caring to do any work, and not striving to defend the truth and right. His only reply to all exhortations will be that whatever was

happening was already written and decreed. In this way he will neglect acquiring noble characteristics and discarding evil traits. It will be a negation of every perfection.

Reply: What we have written on the subject of "Decree", is sufficient to clear this misunderstanding. We have explained there that man's actions are integral parts of the causes of the events and effects. Effects cannot happen without their causes. It would be a manifest error to say: Satiation of hunger is either decreed to happen or decreed not to happen; and in either case, it is useless to eat. We know that satiation of hunger cannot occur unless one takes one's food – and eating is an action with-in one's power, and is a part of the causes of satiation. It is foolishness to expect an effect to appear when one has neglected or negated all or part of its causes.

It is wrong for a man to neglect and negate the principles of "free will and power", which is the king-pin of this worldly life, and to which are attributed its felicity and infelicity. It is a part of the causes of the events which happen to a man through his actions (or through the conditions and traits resulting from his actions). He cannot say that his will and power are not a part of the causes of events happening to him, or that they have no effect on those happenings. In the same way, it is wrong to claim that his power is the complete, or the only, cause of the events and that nothing else has any influence on those events. One should not forget that there are countless things happening in the world which have influence on one's circumstances, conditions and the related events, and that the Divine Will is the foremost among them. If one were to forget this reality, one would be entrapped in many evil traits, like: conceit, pride, miserliness, joy, sorrow and grief, etc.

The ignorant man says: "I did this; I left that." Thus, he falls victim of conceit, shows arrogance to others or does not spend his money on necessary things. He is heedless to the fact that there are thousands and thousands of other causes – apart from his imperfect "power" – absence of any one of which would nullify the effects of his "power". He says: "Had I done this, I would have avoided this loss; had I done so, I would have gained that."

He does not realize that prevention of loss or death depends on thousands and thousands of causes, and even if one of them is absent, the dreaded loss or death is bound to occur, man's own power notwithstanding. Moreover, man's power itself depends on numerous causes which are beyond his power. In short, man's power is not by his power.

The above explanation is a Qur'ãnic reality, and, as mentioned earlier, it is derived from the Divine teachings. When you know this fact and ponder on the relevant verses, you will see that the Qur'ãn attributes only some of the good characteristics to the firm decree and the preserved tablet, while it does not attribute other traits to the above-mentioned Divine Decree. There are some actions, conditions and traits which, if attributed to the Divine Decree and Measure, would nullify the principle of free will; and accordingly the Qur'ãn never attributes them to the Divine Decree; rather, it refutes it with full force. For example :

> *And when they commit an indecency they say: "We found our fathers doing this, and Allãh has enjoined it on us." Say: "Surely, Allãh does not enjoin indecency; do you say against Allãh what you do not know?"* (7:28)

On the other hand there are some actions, etc. which, if not attributed to the Divine Decree, would imply that man had complete freedom, that his will and power were the sufficient cause of his actions, etc. and were independent of every outside cause. The Qur'ãn, therefore, pointedly ascribes them to the Divine Decree, and thus guides the man to the straight path – a path which does not confuse the walker. In this way, the Qur'ãn removes from him the base characteristics which would have resulted from that wrong ideas. For example, it attributes the happenings to the Divine Decree, in order that man should not ignorantly feel joy for what he gets or sorrow for what he loses. Allãh says: *and give them of the wealth of Allãh which He has given you* (24:33) ; note that Allãh exhorts man to be generous, by reminding him that his wealth has come to him from Allãh. Also, He says: . . . *and spend* (benevolently) *out of what We have given them* (2:3) *;* the verse calls him to spend by attributing the

wealth to the sustenance given by Allãh. Again, He says: *Then may be you kill yourself with grief, sorrowing after them, if they do not believe in this announcement. Surely, We have made whatever is on the earth an embellishment for it, so that We may try them* (as to) *which of them is best in deed* (18:6-7). In these verses Allãh tells His Prophet not to grieve because of the unbelievers' disbelief, reminding him that their disbelief does not mean that they have overpowered Allãh; the fact is that what-ever is on the earth has been made and put there by Allãh for the purpose of test and trial.

This system of ethics is the one used by the prophets, and a lot of its examples may be found in the Holy Qur'ãn and other Divine Books.

There is a third system, which is found exclusively in the Qur'ãn; it is neither seen in the Divine Books which have been transmitted to us, nor in the teachings of the previous prophets (peace of Allãh be on them!); nor is it seen in the knowledge which has come to us from divine scholars. In this system, man is trained in character and knowledge, and the knowledge is used in a way that does not leave room for base and low traits. In other words, this system removes the vile characteristics, not by repulsing them, but by eliminating all motives other than Allãh.

Let us explain it in this way: What is the motive of a work done for other than Allãh? It may be honour and might of the 'other than Allãh', which the doer of that work longs for. Or his power which he is afraid of. But Allãh says: *Surely might is wholly Allãh's* (10:65) ; *that the power is wholly Allãh's* (2:165). And when one is imbued with this true knowledge, there will remain no question of doing any deed for letting others see, or hear about it; nor will there be any reason why he should fear, or look forward to, or rely on anyone other than Allãh. Once these two realities are firmly known to a man, his psyche will be cleansed from evils of theory and practice. It will rather be adorned by the positive traits, that is, good character and Divine characteristics; for example, fear of and reliance on Allãh, strength, self-respect, self-sufficiency and other such virtues.

The Qur'ãn has repeatedly said that the kingdom belongs

to Allãh, that the kingdom of the heavens and the earth is His, that to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth, as we have explained several times. Evidently, this kingdom does not leave any independence to anything, nor does it allow the creatures any freedom from want – except through Allãh. Look at anything ; you will see that Allãh is the Owner of its person and of all its concomitants. When a man believes in that owner-ship and this belief becomes firmly-rooted in his heart, he does not admit that anything has got any independence at all – in its person, characteristics or activities. Such a man cannot look except at the face of Allãh, nor can he bow down before, hope for, or have fear of, anything other than Allãh. He will not enjoy or be pleased with any other thing, nor will he rely on, or surrender to, anyone but Allãh. In short, he will not desire or wish for anything except Allãh – the Eternal One Who will remain when everything will perish; he will surely turn away from all the false-hood, that is, from everything other than Allãh; he will not attach any importance to his own existence nor will he care for himself in face of the Absolute Truth, that is, the eternal existence of his Creator – Great is His Glory.

The same is the import of the following verses:

Allãh is He besides Whom there is no god; His are the very best names (20:8) ;

That is Allãh, your Lord, there is no god but He; the Creator of all things (6:102) ;

. . . Who made good everything that He has created (32:7)*;*

And the faces shall be humbled before the Living, the Self-subsistent God (20:111) ;

. . . all are obedient to Him (2:116) ;

And your Lord has commanded that you shall not worship (any) *but Him* (17:23);

. . . is it not sufficient as regards your Lord that He is a witness over all things? (41:53) ;

. . . now surely He encompasses all things (41:54) ;

And that to your Lord is the end goal (53:42).

And the same is the import of the verses under discussion, that is, “and give good news to the patient ones, who when a misfortune

befalls them, say: 'Surely we are Allãh's and to Him we shall return.' Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those are the followers of the right course."

These and similar other verses contain a unique Divine Knowledge, and produce some real and especial results. Their system is not like any other which a moralist might employ, nor even like that used by previous prophets in their teachings. According to the moralists, virtue and evil are based on the public's likes and dislikes; and the prophets based their teachings on the general religious beliefs concerning the rules of the *sharī'ah* and their recompense. But this third system is based on pure and perfect monotheism and it has been used exclusively by Islam – the best of blessings be on its Prophet and his progeny !

A western orientalist has expressed a really strange and astonishing idea in his History where he discusses the Islamic civilization. A gist of his observation is as follows:

"A scholar should concern himself only with various aspects of civilization which were developed by Islam among its followers, and the excellence and superiority which were its legacy to the Muslims in the form of a developed society and high culture. As for the religious precepts which Islam teaches, they are merely the moral teachings which are common to all religions and which were popularized by all the prophets."

COMMENT: The explanation given by us shows how unfounded his opinion is and how confused his views are. The result emerges from its premises; the effects of training emanate from the knowledge acquired by the trainee. As mentioned earlier, there are three types of the teachers of ethics: one invites to a reality of a low grade, another to an average perfection and the third to the pristine reality and highest perfection. Can it be said that the results of all three will be the same? In other words, the scholars of ethics call the people to the sociological truth; the prophets call mankind to the actual truth and real perfection by which it may get the eternal bliss in the life hereafter; but the Islam invites the people to the Absolute Reality, that is, Allãh Himself, and teaches them ethical values by reminding them that

Allãh is One, and there is no partner in His divinity; this belief produces in man the purest servitude. Now you see how dissimilar are the systems employed by the three groups, and how different are the results.

This Islamic system created an admirable social structure, and produced a multitude of good servants, divine scholars and Allãh's friends – men and women alike. And this single factor is sufficient to ensure the distinguished position of Islam.

Moreover, this stystem sometimes differ from the other two in its result also. It is based on the love a servant has for his Lord; it teaches him to give preference to his Lord's wishes over his own. We know that love and enthralment sometimes lure the lover to do things which are not approved by social wisdom (which is the basis of the social ethics), nor are they commended by common sense on which is founded the general religious commandments. Reason has its own rules and love its own. We shall further explain it in some other place, Allãh willing.

QUR'ÃN: *Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those are the followers of the right course.* It appears from meditation on these words that blessings is to a certain extent different from mercy – look how "blessings" has been used in plural and "mercy" in singular. Allãh says: *He it is Who sends His blessings on you, and* (*so* do) *His angels, that He may bring you forth out of utter darkness into the light; and He is Merciful to the believers* (33:43). The context shows that the sentence, "and He is Merciful to the believers", gives the reason of the preceding phrases, "He it is Who sends His blessings on you." The meaning therefore, is as follows: Allãh sends His blessings on you; and it is as it should be, because He is Merciful to the believers, and you are believers; therefore, He sends His blessings on you, to show His mercy to you.

The position of blessing *vis-à-vis* mercy is like that of a premise in relation to its result, or of a glance in comparison to seeing, or of throwing into fire *vis-à-vis* burning. It is in conformity with the explanation, given by some writers of *as-salah* (اَلصَّلٰوةُ = the blessing), that it really means turning towards, inclination.

Blessing from Allãh means that He turns towards the servant with mercy; when attributed to angels it connotes their turning towards a man and becoming a medium to convey Allãh's mercy to him; and when ascribed to man, it means turning to the Lord calling Him with humility. However, it does not mean that blessing itself is not mercy or an example of mercy. Pondering on the usage of "mercy" in the Qur'ãn, we find that it is the comprehensive gift of Allãh, the All-encompassing Divine Bounty. Allãh says: *and* My *mercy encompasses all things* (7:156) ; also, He says: *And your Lord is the self-sufficient one, the Lord of mercy; if He pleases, He may take you off, and make whom He pleases successors after you, even as He raised you up from the seed of another people* (6:133). He may take you off because He is Self-sufficient, He does not need you; and He may make others succeed you, as He had raised you up, because He is Merciful. Even then both aspects are attributed to His mercy, and at the same time they may be attributed to His Self-sufficiency. Every creation – be it from matter or without matter – is a mercy, and also a gift and bounty emanating from His Self-sufficiency.

Allãh says: *and the bounty of your Lord is not confined* (17:20). And one of His bounties is *as-salãh* (the blessing) ; this too is a mercy, but of a especial type. Probably this is the reason why in the verse under discussion, "blessings" has been used in plural and "mercy" in singular.

QUR'ÃN: *and they are the followers of the right course.* It looks like the result of the preceding clause, "Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord". That is why Allãh did not say, 'on whom are blessing and mercy from their Lord and guidance'; instead He described it in a separate sentence. Also, He did not say, 'and they are *al-mahdiyyũn* (اَلمَهْدِيّوُنَ = the rightly guided ones)'; instead their acceptance of guidance has been denoted with the word *al-muhtadũn* (اَلمُهْتَدُونَ = followers of the right course), because "following" describes the next stage, coming after and resulting from "guidance". Evidently, the mercy of Allãh consisted of guiding them to Himself; the blessings were like the preliminaries of that guidance, and their following that right course

was the result of that guidance. Thus, the blessings, the mercy and the following of the right course, all are different from one another, although looking from another angle all three were but Divine Mercy.

Allãh gives good news to these believers of His bestowal of honours to them. To clearly understand the whole sequence, look at the following example: You see in the way a friend of yours who wants to come to your house to be your guest, and is making enquiries as to how to reach your home. You meet him with smiling face, take him to the proper path, walking with him, not leaving him alone lest he loses the way; this continues until you bring him to your house; while on the way, you tend to his needs and look after his meals and transport, and protect him from every hardship and trouble. All these things taken together are called "hospitality" accorded to him; and every care taken of him is a particular care and hospitality; for example, showing him the way is separate from hospitality and care – and even then it is a hospitality. Each of the above acts is a care, and each is a guidance and each is a particular hospitality – and all together come under one word, "hospitality". Applying this example to this verse, the one comprehensive hospitality is like the mercy, and every attention paid to the friend is like the blessings and his being your guest in your house is like the "following the right course".

Many syntactical devices of this sentence point to the prestige and rank of those believers: First, it is a nominal clause; second, it begins with a demonstrative pronoun used for distant objects; third, that pronoun has been reinforced with a separate personal pronoun; and fourth, the predicate begins with the definite article.

TRADITIONS

About al-Barzakh and the Soul's Life after Death:

Suwayd ibn Ghaflah narrates from the Commander of the faithfuls ('Ali, a.s.) that he said: "Surely, when the son of Ãdam comes to (his) last day of this world and the first of the next,

his property, his children and his actions are portrayed before him. So he turns to his property and says: 'By God! I was covetous of you (and) avaricious; so what have you (now) got for me?' (The property) says: 'Take your shroud from me'. Then he turns to his children and says: 'By God! Surely I was your loving (father), and I was your protector; now what have you got for me?' They say: 'We shall convey you to your pit (i.e., grave) and bury you in it.' Then he turns to his deeds and says: 'By God! I was indifferent to you, and you were distasteful to me; (now) what is with you (for me)?' So it says: 'I am your companion in your grave as well as on the Day of your gathering – until I am presented with you before your Lord.' Then (after his death), if he is a friend of Allãh, there comes to him (a visitor), the most sweet-scented of all people, of the most beautiful appearance and (wearing) the most adorned apparel, and says to him: 'Rejoice with refreshment from Allãh, and flowers and the garden of bounties; you arrived a good arrival' (i.e., welcome to you). Thereupon, he says: 'Who are you?' (The visitor) says: 'I am your good deed. Proceed from the world to the garden.' And he recognizes the one who washes his body, and earnestly appeals to his carrier (the bier-bearer) to hasten him (to the grave). Then when he enters his grave, two angels come to him – and they are the examiners of the grave – with elegantly-dressed hairs, writing on the earth with their teeth; their voices are like roaring thunder and their eyes like streaking lightening. They ask him: 'Who is your Lord? And who is your prophet? And what is your religion?' And he says: 'Allãh is my Lord; and Muhammad is my prophet; and Islam is my religion.' So they say: 'May Allãh confirm you in what you like and are pleased with!' And this is (the meaning of) the word of Allãh: *Allãh confirms those who believe with the sure word in this world's life and in the hereafter . . .* (14:27). Then they make his grave spacious for him as far as his eye can see, and open for him a gate to the garden, and say to him: 'Sleep happily the sleep of a fine-looking youth.' And it is the word of Allãh: *The dwellers of the garden shall on that day be in a better abiding place and a better resting place.* (25:24)

"And if he is an enemy of his Lord, then comes to him a

(visitor), the ugliest of the creatures of Allãh in attires and the foulest-smelling. And he tells him: 'Welcome to the entertainment of boiling water and roasting in Hell.' And he (the dead person) recognizes the one who washes his body, and earnestly appeals to his carrier (the bier-bearer) to hold him back. And when he is buried in his grave, the examiners of the grave come to him and remove his shroud from him. Then they ask him: 'Who is your Lord? And what is your religion? And who is your prophet? And he says: 'I do not know.' So they say to him: 'You did not know, nor were you on the right path.' Then they hit him with an iron-rod, a hitting which frightens every creature of Allãh – except the *jinn* and the men. Thereafter they open for him a door to the Hell and tell him: 'Sleep in the worst condition.' So he is squeezed in a narrow space like a shaft in an arrow-head, until his brain comes out from between his nails and flesh; and Allãh sets on him the serpents of the earth and its scorpions and insects which go on biting him until Allãh will raise him from his grave – and he will long for the advent of the Hour, because of the trouble in which he finds himself." (*at-Tafsīr,* al-Qummi)

Abu Bakr al-Ḥaḍrami narrates from Abu Ja'far (a.s.) that he said: "No one shall be questioned in the grave except he who shall be of pure belief or of total disbelief." I told him: "And (what about) the rest of the men?" He said: "They will be kept in oblivion." (*Muntakhab Basã'iri 'd-darajãt*)

Ibn Ẓubyãn says: "I was with Abu 'Abdillãh (a.s.), and he said: 'What do the people say about the souls of the believers after they die?' I said: 'They say (that the souls are placed) in the craws of green birds.' He said: 'Glory be to Allãh! The believer is far more honourable near Allãh than this! When it happens (i.e., when the believer dies) there come to him the Messenger of Allãh and Ali and Fãṭimah and Ḥasan and Ḥusayn (peace be on them), and with them (come) the angels of the Mighty and Glorious Allãh (who are near to him). So, if Allãh lets his tongue speak the witness of His Oneness and the prophethood of the Prophet and the *al-walayah* (الوِلاَيَةُ = love, obedience) of the *Ahlu 'l-bayt,* then the Messenger of Allãh (s.a.w.a.) and 'Ali and Fãṭimah and Ḥasan and

Ḥusayn (peace be on them) and with them the near angels become his witnesses for it. And if his tongue is tied, Allãh confers on His Prophet the knowledge of what is in his (i.e., that believer's) heart of that (belief) ; so he (i.e., the Prophet) becomes his witness; and then bear testimony of Ali, Fãṭimah, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn – because of the testimony of the Prophet – on their group be the best peace from Allãh! and (so do) those angels who are present with them. When Allãh takes him to Himself, He sends that soul to the garden, in a shape similar to his (worldly) shape. They eat (there) and drink. When a new-corner comes to them, he recognizes them by that shape which they had in the world." (*al-Amãlī,* ash-Shaykh aṭ-Ṭũsī)

Ḥammãd ibn 'Uthmãn narrates from Abu 'Abdillãh (a.s.) that he described the souls of the believers and said: "They meet each other." I said: "They meet each other?" He said: "Yes! They ask each other and recognize each other, so that if you see one you will say, '(He is) so-and-so'." (*al-Maḥãsin*)

Abu 'Abdillãh (a.s.) said: "Verily, the believer visits his family and he sees what he likes; and what he dislikes is hidden from him. And verily the unbeliever visits his family and he sees what he dislikes; and what he likes is hidden from him." And he said: "There are some of them who visit (their families) every Friday; and there are others who visit according to their deeds." (*al-Kãfī*)

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said: "Verily, the souls are, with the characteristic features of (their) bodies, in a tree of the garden; they know each other and enquire about each other. When a (new) soul comes to (those) souls, they say: 'Let it be, because it is coming from a great terrifying (experience).' Thereafter, they ask him: 'What has happened to so-and-so? What has so-and-so done?' If the soul tells them, 'I have left him alive', they hope for his (future arrival); and if it tells them, 'He had died', they say: 'He fell down (to Hell) ; he perished.' " (*al-Kãfī*)

The author says: There are numerous traditions on the subject of *al-barzakh.* We have quoted above some comprehensive ones. There is a huge lot of nearly *mutawãtir*

traditions describing the above-mentioned meanings. These traditions prove that the life of *al-barzakh is* an immaterial one.

A PHILOSOPHICAL DISCUSSION ON IMMATERIALITY OF THE SOUL

Is the soul immaterial? The word “soul” in this discussion means that thing which every man refers to when he says “I”. Its “immateriality” refers to the fact that it is not a material thing, it is neither divisible nor governed by time or space.

No doubt, I conceive in myself a concept which I refer to as “I”; and it is equally certain that every man has similar conception about himself. It is a conception which we are never oblivious of – as long As we are alive and conscious. It is not a limb of ours; nor is it a part of our body which we perceive by one of our senses or even through reason. In short, it is not like our external limbs which we feel with our senses of sight or touch, etc., nor is it like our internal organs which we know by senses or experiment. Sometimes we become oblivious of one or another of those limbs or organs – or even of the whole body. But we are never oblivious of the “I”. It proves that the “ I ” is other than the body and its parts.

One thing more. Body and its limbs and parts as well as the faculties and characteristics found in it, are all material. One of the characteristics of matter is gradual change, dissolution and divisibility. If soul were body or a part thereof, it would have been material and subject to change and division – but it is not so. If a man looks at this vision of his “self “ and then compares it with that which he used to look at since the beginning of his gnosis of the “self “, he will find that it is the same vision, the same notion, without the least change or plurality. It is unlike his body or its parts and characteristics which all undergo continuous change, in substance and form as well as in their conditions and positions. Also, he will realize that it is a notion, simple, indivisible and non-compound, unlike the body or its parts and characteristics. And matter and every material thing is a compound and divisible. Obviously, the soul is not body, nor is it a part of the body; it is

neither a development of the body nor one of its characteristics. Coming to matter again, it makes no difference whether we perceived it with a sense of ours or by reasoning, or did not perceive it at all – it is matter and material in any case. And matter is subject to change and divisibility. But we have seen that the vision which we call "soul" is not subject to any of the above characteristics of matter. Therefore, soul is neither matter nor material.

Also, this vision of " I " is a notion, simple and one; there is no plurality of parts therein, nor is there any extraneous item mixed with it; it is an absolute one. Every man finds it in him-self that he is he and not someone else. Therefore, this vision is a concept subsistent by itself, and distinct; it is beyond the definition of matter and is not subject to its characteristics and properties. It is *a al-jawhar* (اَلجَوْهَرُ = lit. "jewel"; technically, a thing that exists in reality and which is the bearer of the accidents), separate from matter; it has a connection with the body which makes it identifiable with the body – and it is the connection of management.

The above discourse proves our claims in this respect.

All the materialists and a group of Muslim theologians as well as the Zãhiristic traditionalists do not accept the immateriality of the soul. But what they have written in support of their view stretches the credulity too far.

Let us have a look at the arguments of the materialists.

They say: 1. The science has nowadays advanced to a previously-undreamt-of extent in its in-depth and minute researches of natural phenomena. It has found and pin-pointed a natural and material cause for every characteristic of the body. It has not found any psychological effect which could not be explained according to the material laws. This being the case, why should we believe in the existence of an immaterial soul?

2. The nervous system continuously conveys the perceptions to its centre (i.e., brain) with extreme rapidity. The vision thus perceived is a unified series, having a single position. The pictures formed in mind are substituted with such rapidity that one frame is not distinguishable from another; that is, mind does not realize

that the preceding frame has gone and been replaced by another. It is this composite "one", this illusory "unit", which we see and call our soul, and which we refer to as "I". It is true that it is other than all our limbs and organs; but it does not necessarily mean that it is other than body and its characteristics. The fact is that it is a composite series which appears to be one, because of continuous and rapid substitutions – and we are never oblivious of it, because such an oblivion would result in nullity of the nervous system – in other words, death.

Also, it is true that my vision of my " I " is constant. But it is not because there is a thing which is constant and unchanged. In fact, it is only an illusion resulting from a series of constantly and rapidly changing visions. Suppose there is a water-tank with an inlet and an outlet of the same diameter; water comes in from one side and goes out from the other, with exactly the same speed – and the tank seems always full. Our sense perceives the water as one, constant and unchanged unit, but in reality it is neither the same water nor is it constant and unchanged. Even if there is a reflection in the water, of a man, tree or some other object, it will look as unchanged, steady and constant, but actually it is not so – it is not one, it is gradually changing with the gradual change of the water. The same is the case of the apparent oneness, constancy and unchangeability which we see in our soul, self or "I".

3. The soul, for whose immateriality arguments have been offered, based on the inner vision, is in fact a composite of natural faculties and characteristics. It is the sum-total of nervous perceptions, which in their turn emanate from mutual action and reaction between external matter and nervous system. It is a composite unity, not the real one.

COMMENT: 1. It is true that the science, based on senses and experiments, with all its minute, delicate and in-depth researches, has not come across a "soul". Also, it is correct that it has not found any phenomenon which irresistibly led one to the soul as its cause. But these two premises do not prove that there is not an immaterial soul – after all, we have written earlier the proofs of

its existence. The natural sciences, which discuss the laws of nature and the properties of matter, are by definition limited to the researches concerning matter only, which is its subject. The apparatus and chemicals, etc. which sciences use to conduct and complete their tests and experiments, may throw light on matter and material affairs only. But by the same token these, sciences and their apparatus, etc. cannot pass any judgment – for or against – on metaphysical and immaterial concept and beings. Utmost that a natural science can say is that it did not find a soul. But "not finding" is not "non-existence". The natural sciences, by their definition, are not expected to find within their subject (i.e., within matter and its properties and characteristics) something beyond the limit of matter and physical nature.

In fact, their above-mentioned assertion emanates from a gross misunderstanding. They think that those who believed in the existence of soul, did so because they look at some biological functions of their limbs which they could not explain within the framework of their incomplete knowledge, and so they said that there was something immaterial, that is, the soul, that was the source of those functions. But now the science has developed by leaps and bounds and has pin-pointed the natural causes of all such functions. Therefore, there is no need now to believe in the putative soul. (It is the same trend of thought which they have followed while denying the existence of the Creator.)

Obviously, it is a wrong assumption. Those who believe in the existence of soul, do not do so because of that supposed difficulty; they do not ascribe some bodily function (of known causes) to the body, and some others (of unknown causes) to the soul. Rather, they ascribe all bodily functions to the body – directly – and to the soul – indirectly, through the body. They ascribe to the soul only one function which cannot be ascribed to the body in any way – man's gnosis of self and his vision of his person or "I".

2. They have said that the reality seen by man as one is, in fact, a series of nervous perceptions coming to the central nervous system one after another with extreme rapidity but their oneness

is only composite. But this assertion is quite irrelevant, and it has nothing to do with the vision of the self. We have argued on the strength of the vision of the self; they are talking about arrival of the sensual visions from the peripheral sense-organs to the central nervous system, and its results. Well, let us suppose, as they say, that actually there are many things, that is, perceptions which have no real oneness; and those perceptions are all material, there is nothing behind them except their own reality; and that the vision which is 'one soul' is in fact the sum-total of these numerous perceptions. If so, then where did this "one" come from – the one which is our only vision, whose "other" has never been perceived by us? Where did this perceived oneness come from?

The talk about "composite oneness" is more like a jest than a serious proposition. A "composite one" is in reality a collection of numerous things without any oneness at all. Its oneness is imaginary, as we may say one house or one line, which is not one in fact. What they say amounts to this: The perceptions and sensations which are pluralistic and manifold in themselves are one perceptions in itself.

It means that these perceptions are numerous in reality, having no oneness at all, and at the same time they are actually only one perception; there is nothing beyond these sensual perceptions to perceive them as one perception – unlike a sense or imagination which consecutively and collectively receives manifold sensory or imaginary perceptions, and perceives them as one. They claim that those manifold perceptions are in themselves one perception – there is no other faculty beyond them which treats this collective vision as a composite one. Also, it is not possible to say that that perceiving is done by a part of brain which perceives the pluralistic picture as "one" – because it will not remove our objection: The perception of that part of brain is itself a part of those consecutively and rapidly-perceived picture, and our objection covers that perception too. That part of brain does not possess a separate perception-power which would deal with these perceptions – as an external sense deals with the external matters and acquires through them sensory pictures. (Ponder on this point.)

Exactly the same arguments (as we have offered above against "oneness" of the sensual perceptions) apply with equal force against firmness and indivisibility of this vision which is always changing and divisible by its very nature.

Apart from that, the premises – that these manifold, consequently (and with extreme rapidity) perceived pictures are perceived by mental vision as one – is wrong in itself. What is brain or its faculties? What is perception and the perceived picture? All these things are material – and matter and material are in their quiddity manifold, changeable and divisible. But the gnosis of "self" is not subject to these material defects. Is it not strange that even then they claim that there is nothing beyond matter and material?

3. They have said that the senses or the perceiving faculties become confused and consequently perceive manifold, divisible and changing things as one indivisible and unchanging thing. But this assertion is manifestly wrong. Error or confusion is a relative – and not an absolute – effect which occurs when one thing is compared with another. For example, we perceive the celestial bodies as small bright dots. Of course, this perception is wrong as we know from academic proofs and our other perceptions. But this error is found out when we compare our sensory perception with the reality of these perceived luminous bodies. As far as that sensory perception itself is concerned, it is a reality – we are actually perceiving small bright dots. And to that extent there is no question of any error or confusion.

The subject under discussion is not different from the above-given example. When our senses and faculties look at numerous divisible and changing things and perceive them as one indivisible and unchanging thing, their confusion and error is found out only when that picture is compared with the real thing existing outside. But so far as the perceived picture found in that faculty or sense is concerned, it is undoubtedly one, unchanging and in-divisible – and such a thing cannot be material because it lacks the properties of matter and material.

In short, the above discourse shows that the argument offered by materialists on the basis of senses and experiment,

only proves that they could not find the soul. The fallacy is that they have proved 'not finding' and think that it proves 'non-existence'. Also, the picture painted by them to illustrate the vision of self or soul – the vision that is a single, simple and unchangeable reality – is irrelevant and wrong; that picture is in accord neither with established principles of materialism nor with the actual fact.

Now, we should have a look at the definition of soul or psyche as given by the psychologists. According to them, it is the unified condition resulting from the actions and reactions of various psychological activities – like perception, will, pleasure, love, etc. – which give rise to that unified condition. We have no-thing to say about this definition, because scholars of every branch of knowledge have right to postulate a subject for their scholarly pursuit and deliberation. And so have the psychologists.

Our concern is about the existence (or inexistence) of the soul in reality, quite independent of the assumptions of the thinkers. And it is a question within the domain of philosophy, not psychology.

There are some scholars of theology who believe that the soul is not immortal. They say: It has been established by the disciplines related to human life, like anatomy and physiology, that man's spiritual and biological characteristics emanate from live cells; those cells are the foundations of human and animal lives. Spirit or soul, therefore, is a characteristics and especial effect of those countless cells – each of which contains a life of its own. What the man calls his soul – and to which he refers as "I" – is a composite entity made up of countless souls. We know that these life conditions and spiritual characteristics cease to exist when the life-giving germs and cells die. In this back-ground, there is no question of a single immaterial soul or spirit which is supposed to continue even after the body dies. True that the principles of materialism, established after scientific researches, are yet unable to unravel the mysteries of life. There-fore, we may say that the physical causes are unable to create the soul, and accordingly, it may have been brought

into being by a metaphysical being. The attempt to prove the immateriality of the soul by purely rationalistic argument is unacceptable in the world of modern knowledge, which does not rely on anything other than the senses and experiments.

The author says: On meditation you will see that all the objections written against the materialists' arguments apply with equal force to this argument too. The following two objections are over and above that:

First: If the scientific research is uptil now unable to unravel the mysteries of soul and realities of life, it does not necessarily mean that it cannot do so even in future; nor that these spiritual characteristics are in fact not based on material causes – although we may not know it. Therefore, the theologians' argument is nothing but a fallacy by which they have equalized inexistence of knowledge with knowledge of inexistence.

Second: They seem to ascribe some worldly affairs – that is, the physical phenomena – to matter, and some others – that is, spiritual affairs – to a metaphysical cause, that is, the Creator. But it implies that there are two creators in the world. It is a proposition which is neither acceptable to the materialists nor the theists. And all the arguments of monotheism rebut such assumption.

There are some other objections against immateriality of soul, described in books of philosophy and theology; all of them show that the writers concerned have not pondered on the proof given by us, nor have they understood its main theme. That is why we have refrained from quoting and commenting on them here. Anyone desirous to know them should look into the books concerned. And Allãh is the Guide.

A DISCOURSE ON ETHICS

Ethics is the science which looks into human traits, related to man's vegetable, animal and human characteristics, and differentiates the good traits from the bad ones, in order that man may complete his practical happiness by acquiring the good traits; and thus emanate from him such actions as attract to him general praise from the human society.

Ethics shows that human morality finally belongs to three comprehensive faculties of man. These faculties lead the psyche to acquire practical knowledge, from which emanate all actions of the human species. These are the desire, anger and rational faculty. Human actions are divided into three categories: Either they are intended to gain some benefit, for example: eating, drinking and wearing clothes, etc. They issue forth from the faculty of desire; or they are aimed at protecting, or repulsing harmful effects from, one's person, honour or property, etc. These actions emanate from the faculty of anger. Or they are related to mental conception and proposition, for example, arranging syllogism, preparation of argument, etc. Such mental activities are caused by rational faculty. Man's personality is composed of these three faculties, and they, by joining together, emerge as a composite unit and become the source of all human activities and actions. In this way, man attains his felicity and happiness, which is the final cause of this composition.

It is therefore necessary for man not to let any of these three faculties deviate from the middle path to either the right or the left, not to allow any of these to exceed the limit or to be deficient – as it would disturb the ratio of that particular ingredient, which would result in changing the entire nature of the composite unit, that is, man himself. This would negate the reason for which the man was created, that is, the felicity of the whole species.

The middle course for any of the faculties is to use it as it should be – both in quantity and quality. The middle course for the faculty of desire is called continence, and its two sides of excess and deficiency are greed and undue quiescence, respectively. The middle course for the faculty of anger is bravery, and the two sides are rashness and cowardice. The middle course of the faculty of rationality is called wisdom, and the two sides are deception and dull-mindedness.

When the three good characteristics – continence, bravery and wisdom – combine in a man, a fourth characteristic is born, just as a new quality emerges when different ingredients of a medicine or mixture are blended together. And that quality is called justice. Justice gives each faculty its due right and puts it in its proper place.

Its two undesirable sides are inflicting injustice and surrendering to it.

These four – continence, bravery, wisdom and justice – are the roots of all virtuous characteristics, of good morality. Each of them has numerous branches which issue forth from it and belong to it. They have the same relationship with the above-mentioned roots as a species has with its genus. Examples of these branches are generosity and magnanimity, contentedness and gratitude, patience and gallantry, courage and modesty, sense of honour and sincerity, nobility and humility, and so on. These are the branches of virtuous characteristics, which are given in detail in the books of the Ethics. The following is a 'family-tree' showing its roots and branches, (see p. 231).

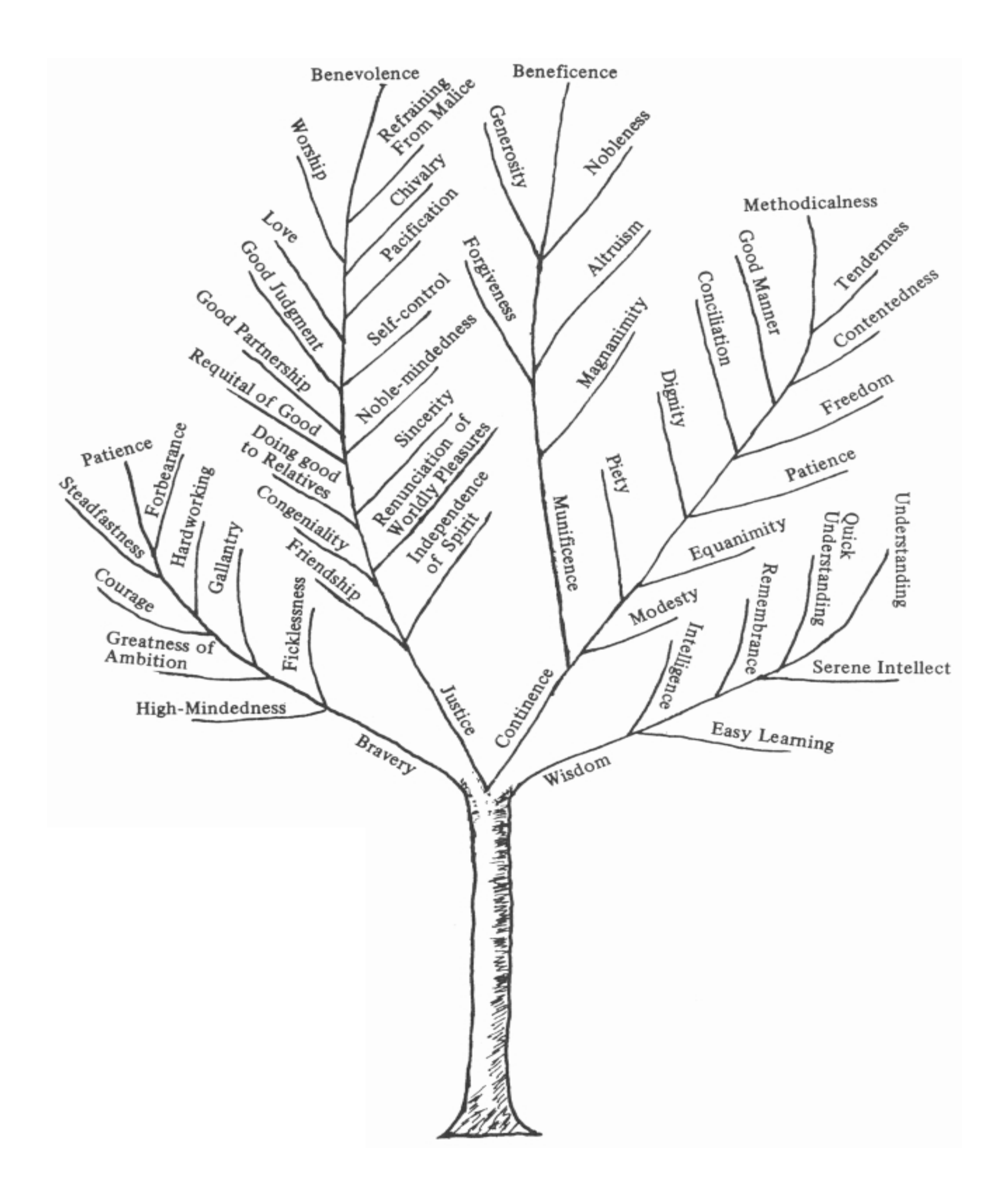
And the Ethics defines each of them and distinguishes the middle course from its two sides of excess and deficiency; then it explains why a virtue is virtue, then shows how it can be acquired, until it becomes a firm trait, that is, by firm belief that it is good and virtuous trait and by repeatedly practising it until it becomes a firmly-rooted characteristic of the soul.

For example: We say to a coward: Cowardice is born when the psyche is gripped by fear; and fear emanates from something which may happen or may not happen – in future; and such a thing, whose existence and inexistence both are equally possible, cannot be tipped to either side without a cause; a man of reason should not indulge in such fantasies; therefore, a man should not allow himself to be gripped by fear.

When a man teaches himself this theoretical aspect, and then repeatedly enters into dangerous situations and resolutely proceeds towards alarming perils, he soon gets rid of the bad trait of fear. The same is the case with all the virtues and evils.

The above description is based on the first system, as was explained in the commentary. That system tries to reform the character and to create a balance, a moderation, in moral traits, in order that the man may be praised and his virtues lauded by the society.

Somewhat similar is the approach of the second system



NOTE: since the author has described the branches of virtuous characteristics in the text in tree form, and in the explanatory figure (of the original work) he has also chosen the tree form representation, we therefore have duplicated the explanatory figure in the same manner (*pub.*)

brought by the prophets and the divine legislators. The only difference is in the aims and objects of the two systems. While the first system aims at acquiring a perfect trait because it is approved by the society and attracts praise from the people, the second one aims at achieving by it the genuine happiness for the man, that is, perfection of belief in Allãh and His signs, and the felicity of the next world, which is the real happiness and perfection. Yet, both systems are similar in that, the ultimate goal of both is the perfection of man in his character and morals.

As for the third system (which was explained earlier), it differs from the above two, in that it aims at seeking the pleasure of Allãh, not at achieving human perfection. Consequently, its goals sometimes differ from that of the earlier two systems. It is quite possible that what appears as the middle way from this point of view, may not look so from the other two angles. When the faith of a servant proceeds on this path of perfection, when it goes on from strength to strength, his soul is attracted towards meditation about his Lord; he keeps the beautiful Divine Names before his vision, and constantly looks at His lovely attributes which are free from every defect and deficiency; his soul is relentlessly attracted to Allãh going higher and higher in his meditation, until there comes a stage where he worships Allãh as though he (man) were looking at Allãh, and Allãh were looking towards him. At this stage he feels the Divine Presence in his attraction, meditation and love. The love increases from strength to strength, because man by nature loves beauty. Allãh has said: *and those who believe are stronger in* (their) *love for Allãh* (2 :165). Such a man begins following the Messenger of Allãh in all his doings, in every situation, because love of a thing results in the love of its signs, and the Messenger of Allãh (s.a.w.a.) is the wonderful sign of Allãh. (In fact, the whole universe is a sign and token of Allãh.) This love becomes stronger and stronger until a time comes when the servant cuts himself from every thing, in devotion of Allãh; he loves nothing except his Lord, he bows before none other than Allãh. Whenever such a man looks at a thing which has some beauty and attraction, he finds in it a sample – although imperfect – of the Divine Beauty. He knows that it is but a reflection

of the inexhaustible perfection, the unending beauty and incomprehensible splendour of Allãh. Allãh's is the beauty, grace, perfection and magnificence; every beauty and perfection found in other things, in reality belongs to Him, because every thing is a sign of Allãh – it is its only reality, it is nothing more than that; it has no other disposition; it is but a reflection showing the image of the original. This man is, and remains, overwhelmed by love; and he does not look at anything but only because it is a sign of his Lord. In short, all strings connecting his heart to other things are snipped off, leaving it attached only to the love of Allãh. Whatever he loves, it is only for the sake of Allãh and in the cause of Allãh.

At this stage, the mode of his perceptions and actions undergoes a drastic change. When he looks at a thing, he sees Allãh before it and with it, every thing loses its independence and identity in his eyes. What he sees and perceives is different from what other people see and perceive; the people look at things from be-hind a curtain, while he sees them in their true form. This shows the difference in perception, and similar is the case of actions. As he does not love anything except Allãh, he does not want any-thing except for Allãh, seeking His Sublime Majesty. He neither seeks nor intends, neither hopes no fears, neither chooses nor abandons, becomes neither despaired nor depressed, is neither pleased nor displeased – except for Allãh and in the cause of Allãh. Thus, his aims and goals differ totally from those of other people; his motive is diametrically opposed to that of his fellow beings. Previously, he acquired a virtue because it was a human perfection, and discarded an evil because it was a defect. But now his only interest is in seeking the Sublime Majesty of Allãh; he does not care about any perfection or defect, nor is he attracted to any worldly praise or cherished remembrance; he rises above this world as well as the next; he takes into consideration neither the Paradise nor the Hell – he discards every thing and rises above them. Now, his destination is his Lord; his provision, his humility of servitude; and his guide, his love. As a poet has said:

Love narrated to me the traditions of amour,
Through its chain of narrators, from neighbourhood

of a distinguished personality,
And narrated to me the breath of fresh breeze,
From the branching trees, from the valley of euphorbia
from the heights of Najd,
From the tear, from my sour eye, from passion,
From sorrow, from my wounded heart, from ecstasy of love,
That my ardor and love have sworn together,
To my destruction till I am laid down in my grave.

This discourse, although short and concise, explains our theme (if you study it carefully). It shows that in this third system of the Ethics the question of human perfection or defect becomes irrelevant; and the aim is changed from human perfection to the Sublime Majesty of Allãh. As a result, the outlook is changed from those of the other two systems; and it may happen sometimes that what is counted as a virtue in other systems becomes evil in this one, and vice versa.

Now, we should turn our attention to one remaining topic. There is another theory of Ethics which differs from the above-mentioned three systems; and probably it may be counted as a separate system. **They say:** Ethics and morality changes in its roots and shoots with the changes occurring in the society, because virtue and vice change with the changing society, they are not based on any permanent, unalterable, firm foundation. Allegedly it emanates from the theory of evolution of matter.

They say: Human society has come into being because of various needs and requirements of life, which man wants to fulfil through the agency of society. He tries to keep the society alive which, he thinks, preserves his own existence. The nature is governed by the law of evolution and gradual perfection. Consequently, society too undergoes constant changes and proceeds to a more perfect and more developed goal. If an action conforms with the aim of society – that is, perfection – it is called virtue; otherwise, it is vice. Therefore, virtue and vice cannot remain unchanged, they are not static or permanent. There is nothing like absolute virtue or absolute vice; they are relative ideas,

which change with the changing societies, according to regions and times. As the virtue and vice – being relative factors – under-go changes, so do the ethical and moral values. In other words, Ethics is not absolute; its views on good and bad characteristics are liable to change with circumstances.

From the above, we may infer that Ethics follows the nation-al or social aspirations – the aspirations which are a means of achieving the social perfection (which is the goal of the society) ; and virtue and vice are governed by it. Whatever promotes development, whatever helps the society in reaching its goal and achieving its aspiration, is good and virtue; and whatever hinders from that goal, whatever keeps the society backward, is evil and vice. Accordingly, lie, false allegation, indecency, hard-heartedness, robbery and shamelessness may become good and virtuous, if they promote the aspiration of the society. And truth, chastity and mercy may become bad and evil – if they hinder it from achieving its goal.

This is a gist of this strange theory which has been adopted by the materialist communists. This theory is not a new one, contrary to their claims. In ancient Greece, the Cynics reportedly had the same idea. Likewise, Mazdakites (the followers of Mazdak, who lived in Iran during the reign of Kisra and was the first to call to communism) were practising it; and even today some primitive tribes in Africa and elsewhere follow this tenet.

However, it is a false theory, and the proof offered in its support is wrong both in its foundation and structure. Before exposing its falsehood, a few points should be made clear:

1. Every being – that which has external existence – has an inseparable personality of its own. Consequently, one being cannot be another being. For example, existence of Zayd has a personality and a sort of unity which prevents it from becoming the personality of ‘Amr. Zayd is one person and ‘Amr is another; they are two persons, two human beings, not one. It is a premise whose truth cannot be doubted. (There is a totally different proposition which says: “The physical universe is a being having one individual reality.” This proposition should not be confused with the above-mentioned premise.)

2. It follows that the external existence is one and the same with personality. But mental ideas are different from external beings and their existence is not their personality. Reason admits that an idea – whatever it may be – may be applied to more than one individual, for example, the idea of man, or that of a tall man, or that of the man standing before us.

The logicians divide idea into general and particular. Also, they divide the particular into two categories of relative and real. But these divisions are done when an idea is seen *vis-à-vis* another idea, when it is put at the side of the other; or when it is seen in relation to external existence.

This property of the ideas – their applicability to more than one individual – is also sometimes called "generality"; its opposite being "individuality" or "unity".

3. An external physical being is governed by the law of change and general movement. Therefore, it has an expanse and that expanse is divisible into boundaries and pieces, each piece being different from other preceding or following ones. Yet, it is connected with them in its existence. Otherwise, without that connection, it could not be said to be changing or evolving. (If a thing is removed completely and is replaced by an entirely new thing, it cannot be said that the first evolved and changed into the second. If one thing is to change into another, there must be a common factor joining them together.)

4. It follows that that movement is a single thing having its own identity and personality. It looks numerous when it is seen in relation to the boundaries of a thing (as mentioned above). That relation distinguishes one piece from the others. But as for the movement itself, it is a single uninterrupted flow. This characteristic of the movement – this constant flow – is also called a "generality" in contrast to the relations it has with each boundary; we say "general movement", meaning a movement free of its relations with the boundaries and pieces.

This "generality" is a thing existing in reality, unlike the "generality of the ideas" mentioned in (2) above, which is mental attribute of idea – an imaginary attribute of an imaginary being.

5. Undoubtedly, man is a physical being; humanity has many

members, as well as its own laws and characteristics. What is created by nature is one individual, singly and separately. It does not create the collection of people which we call human society. Of course, the nature was aware that man needs somethings to perfect his existence which he could not obtain on his own. There-fore, the nature equipped him with organs, faculties and powers which would be useful in his endeavours to make up his deficiencies within the framework of society. Obviously, the single man is the goal of creation, primarily and principally, while society is a secondary goal, just a by-product.

6. The human nature demands a society and proceeds towards it, (if we can use the words of demand, causality and movement – in their real sense – about the society!). What is the real relation between man and this society? An individual man is a single and personal being (in the sense we have described above). At the same time, he is constantly on move, changing, evolving, proceeding to his perfection. That is why every piece of his changing being is different from other pieces. Yet his is a nature, flowing, "general", preserved in all the stages of the changes; in short, his nature is a single personality. This nature found in this individual man is preserved by the means of procreation, by branching out of one individual into other individuals. It is this factor which is called "nature of the species". It is preserved through the individuals, even if they are changed, even if they undergo creation and destruction (in the same way as was explained about the individual's nature). Individual's nature exists and proceeds towards personal perfection. Likewise, nature of species exists and proceeds towards the perfection of the species.

There is no doubt that this endeavour for perfection of species exists in the natural system. That is what we mean when we say, for example, that the human species proceeds towards perfection; or that today's man is a more perfect being than the primitive man. The same demand for perfection of species is in the minds of those scientists who speak about the evolution of species. Had there not been a nature of species, existing in reality, preserved in the individuals .(or in species), such talks would not have had any

value – it would have been just a metaphorical speech.

As with the individuals, so with the society. There is an individual, or let us say particular, society, which is found amongst the people of a nation, of a time or of a region. Also, there is a general society found in the human species, continuing with its continuation, evolving with its evolution (if it be correct that society, like a social man, is an externally existing condition of an externally existing nature!).

7. Society moves and evolves with the movements and changes of man. This society is a single entity from the initial stage of the movement to wherever it proceeds to, with a general existence. This "one" (which changes because of its relation with each and every boundary) becomes divided into numerous pieces. And every "piece" is a part of the society, that is, a "man". The parts or members of the society rely in their being on the persons of mankind. In the same way the general civilization – in the sense described above – depends on the general human nature. The law governing a unit is a unit of the law; and the law governing a "general" is the general rule. ("General rule" does not mean an abstract rule, because we are not talking about "general ideas".) Undoubtedly an individual man, being a single entity, is governed by a rule, which continues with his continuation. Yet that rule undergoes partial changes, following the changes occurring in the man himself. For example, there is the rule that the physical man takes food, acts by his will, has feelings and imagination, thinks and perceives. These rules exist and continue as long as the man himself exists. Of course, minor changes may occur in those general rules consequent to the changes occurring in the man.

The same principle applies to the humanity in general, the general mankind, which exists with the existence of its individuals.

8. As establishment of society is a law of human nature and one of its characteristics, so the general society is a characteristic of the general human species. (By general society we mean the society, *per se,* the society established by human

nature and which is continuing uninterruptedly from the day man came into being to this time.) This general society exists and continues with the humanity. And the laws of society which it has brought into being will remain intact as long as the general society exists. Of course, some minor changes may occur in it but the main principles will remain unchanged, like the mankind itself, which continues although its individual members go on changing.

Now it is clear that there are some ethical principles which are unchangeable and are valid for ever – like general virtue and vice – as the general society is firm, constant and unalterable from the beginning. Society cannot turn into non-society (i.e., individuality) – although a particular civilization may give way to another particular civilization. Likewise, general virtue (and vice) cannot turn into non-virtue (or non-vice) – although a particular virtue may evolve into some other particular virtue.

9. An individual man needs – for his existence and continuation – some perfections and benefits which he must achieve and acquire for his own self. That is why nature has equipped him with organs and faculties to help him in this compulsory quest, for example, alimentary canal for food intake and digestion, and sexual organs for reproduction and continuation of the species. It is obligatory for man to use these systems for the purpose they have been created for. He should not completely ignore them by leaving them unused, because it would be against the dictate of nature. Likewise, he should not over-indulge in these activities, he should not eat or cohabit more than necessary; for example, he should not go on eating until he becomes sick, or dies, or becomes unable to use his other faculties. He must keep to the middle course in achieving all his requirements, perfections and benefits. This middle course is called continence; and its two undesirable sides are greed and undue quiescence.

Likewise, we see that every individual, in his existence and continuation, is faced with many such things which are harmful to him and which he is obliged to resist, and repulse from him-self. And this "obligation" is proved by the fact that nature has equipped him with the organs and powers to defend himself with. Therefore, it is obligatory for him to defend himself and resist the harmful things – keeping himself on the middle course. He should not neglect and

crush these powers nor should he overuse them. This middle course is called bravery, and the other two sides are rashness and cowardice.

The same is the case with wisdom and its two sides, deception and dull-mindedness; as well as with justice and its two sides, injustice and surrender to injustice.

These are, thus, the four faculties and virtues which are demanded by the nature of an individual man – the nature which is equipped with its necessary tools: continence, bravery, wisdom and justice. And all of them are good and virtues. Good is that which is in conformity with the ultimate goal of a thing and promotes its perfection and felicity; and, as explained above, all the four are in conformity with the felicity of the individual. And their eight opposites are bad and evil.

When an individual, by his nature and in himself, has this attribute, then he would be having it also within the framework of the society. Society, being a product of nature, cannot negate nature's rules; otherwise, it would be a contradiction in terms. After all, what is society if not the co-operation of the individuals to facilitate the perfection of their natures and achievement of their aspirations.

10. Human species in framework of the "general" society has the same characteristics as an individual has in his particular society, as mentioned above. Human species in its civilization tries to achieve its perfection by repulsing what is harmful and acquiring what is beneficial to it; by learning as much as is good for it and practising justice – that is, giving everyone his due right, without indulging into injustice and without surrendering to injustice. And all these four characteristics are virtues. The civilization, *per se,* decrees that they are absolute virtues and their opposites are absolute vices.

The above discourse clearly shows that in the constant and perpetual human society, there are absolute virtues and absolute vices – society cannot "be" without them. It also shows that the four fundamental ethical values are absolutely good and virtuous and their opposites absolutely bad and evils; as has been decreed by the social nature of humanity. And the case of their branches is not different from that of the roots.

They too are absolute and unchanging – although there may occur some differences sometimes in their applications, as we shall mention afterwards.

Now it is clear that what they have said concerning relativity in morality is not correct : –

They said: "Absolute virtue and vice do not exist. What exists is the relative virtue and relative vice; and it is a changing thing which varies with regions, times and societies."

Reply: It is a fallacy, because they have confused the "generality of idea" with "generality (i.e., continuation) of existence". It is true that absolute good and vice – in the meaning of general ideas – do not have external (i.e., real) existence. But here we are not concerned with them. What we are concerned with are absolute virtue and vice – in the meaning of lasting social factors which continue as long as the society exists, by decree of nature. The aim of the society is the happiness of the species. And it is impossible to think that all happenings and possible events and actions would always be good for the society. Surely some would conform with its needs and some would not. Accordingly there would always be good and evil in the society. How can we suppose existence of a society – of any type – in which the members do not believe that every one should be given his due right, or that it is necessary to gain benefit to its proper limit, or that they must protect and defend the cause of the society as and when needed, or that the knowledge – by which man differentiates what is beneficial from what is harmful – is a good attribute? These four beliefs are the above-mentioned justice, continence, bravery and wisdom. As was said, every society, of any description whatsoever, decrees that these four characteristics are good and virtuous. Moreover, how can we think of a society that does not ordain that one must refrain from indecencies? And that feeling is modesty, a branch of continence. Or a society that does not exhort one to be enraged when rights are usurped or the sanctity of sacred things violated? And it is the earnest sense of honour

which is a branch of bravery. Or that one should be happy with his due social rights? And it is contentedness. Or that one should preserve one's social status without snubbing other people, without putting them out of countenance by one's arrogance? And it is modesty and humility. We may go on enumerating in the same way each and every branch of the ethics and morality.

They say: "The views often differ from society to society on what virtue is. One thing is considered as virtue in one society, while another society treats it as vice."

Reply: Of course, there are some minor examples of this phenomenon. But it is not because one society believed in acquiring good traits while the other dismissed it as unnecessary. Whatever the difference, it only occurs because one society believes that trait to be good, while the other thinks it is evil. So the difference is not about the principle, it is only in its application.

For example: The societies ruled by autocratic rulers used to believe that the sovereign had total authority over his subjects, and absolute power to do whatever he wished and order whatever he liked. But that belief was not based on any negative attitude towards justice. It actually emanated from their belief that that absolute power was the due right of the ruler; they thought that what the ruler was doing was not injustice, he was only exercising his due authority and taking his just right.

Likewise, some societies thought that it was a shame if their kings studied to acquire knowledge, as is reported about French kings of the medieval ages. But it was not because they looked down at the virtue of knowledge; it was only because they thought that acquiring knowledge of politics and studying the ways of managing various government departments would conflict with the king's rightful royal activities and engagements.

In the same way, some societies do not acknowledge any excellence in chastity of women (i.e., not establishing sexual relation with any man other than their husbands), and their modesty. Nor do they believe that their men should feel enraged if their women indulged in licentiousness. The same is the case with some other virtues like contentedness and humbleness etc.

But it is only because those societies do not think that these things fall under continence, modesty, self-respect, contentedness and humbleness. It is not that they do not accept these main virtues as virtues. After all, they praise a judge or a ruler if he practices continence in his rule and judgment. They appreciate it if one is ashamed of breaking a law; they laud a man who, overcome by national zeal, defends the nation's independence, the cause of civilization, or the sanctity of other sacred values. They praise a man who remains content with what the law has allotted to him; and applaud the loyalty and obedience shown by the public to their leaders and rulers.

They say: "Whether a characteristic is good depends on its conformity with the goals of social aspirations." Then they come to the conclusion that the said characteristic's excellence depends on its conformity with the society's goals. But it is a clear fallacy. Society is an institution which comes into being when its members enforce, and act upon, all the laws decreed by nature. This society is bound to take them to their happiness and felicity (provided there is no disturbance in its arrangement and flow) ; and the society is bound to have some rules and regulations like virtue and vice, good and evil. On the other hand "society's aspiration" is just a set of some imaginary ideas, invented for creating a society on prescribed lines by imposing it on its members. In other words, society and society's aspirations are two completely different things: Society is an established fact, society's aspiration is only a potential which is yet to come into being; the former is an actual fact while the latter is only a plan yet to be implemented. How could one be equated with the other? The virtue and vice are brought into being by the general society on the demands of the human nature; how could such an actual fact be brought under the domain of some aspirations – the aspirations which are nothing but some imaginary notions?

Question: The general civilization, brought into being by nature, has no authority of its own; whatever authority there is, it belongs to its goals and aspirations – especially if it is a theory

conforming to the happiness of the society's individuals.

Reply: The preceding discussion about virtue and vice and good and evil, shall be repeated in this case again – until the talk stops at a permanent, perpetual and unchanging decree of nature.

Apart from that, there is another difficulty. Let us suppose that virtue and vice as well as all the rules of civilization depend on the goals and aspirations of the society. And it is those aspirations on which the arguments of these people are based. But it is possible – nay a fact – that there may be different conflicting goals and aspirations within one society, or between different societies. Which aspiration would then prevail? Which one the people should give preference to? Which would be acceptable to the general society? The fact is that in this situation there will only be one criterion, and that is the power and domination; in other words, might is right. How can it be believed that the human nature led the human beings to a social structure whose parts are in conflict with one another? Can the society be governed by a rule which would negate the society itself? Is it not an ignominious contradiction in the rule of nature and the demands of its existence?

A FEW TRADITIONS ON SOME RELATED TOPICS

al-Bãqir (a.s.) said: "A man came to the Messenger of Allãh (s.a.w.a.) and said: 'I am keen (and) enthusiastic for *jihãd.*' (The Messenger of Allãh) said: 'Then do *jihad* in the way of Allãh, because if you are killed, you shall remain alive near Allãh and sustained, if you die (before that), then your reward is indeed with Allãh . . .'

The author says: The Prophet's words, "and if you die . . .", point to the word of Allãh: *and whoever goes forth from his house emigrating to Allãh and His Messenger, and then death overtakes him, his reward is indeed with Allãh. . .* (4:100). It also shows that proceeding to *jihad is* emigration to Allãh and His Messenger.

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said about the prophet Ismã'īl, whom Allãh has named "Truthful in promise": "He was named 'Truthful in promise' because he had promised a man (to wait for him) in a place. So he remained waiting for that man for one year. There-fore, Allãh named him 'True of promise'. Then that man came to him after that (long) time and Ismã'īl said to him, 'I have been waiting for you . . .' " (*al-Kãfī*)

The author says: It is a thing which average wisdom would probably say was a deviation from middle course, while Allãh has counted it as an excellent virtue of the said prophet, increasing thereby his prestige and raising his status, as He has said: *And mention Ismã'īl in the Book, surely he was truthful in* (his) *promise, and he was a messenger, a prophet. And he enjoined on his family prayer and alms-giving, and was one in whom his Lord was well pleased* (19:54-5). The fact is that the criterion by which this action was judged is different from the one used by common wisdom. The average wisdom, the common sense, looks at the things according to its own views, and Allãh looks after His friends by His Own help and support; and the word of Allãh is the High. Many similar events have been narrated about the Prophet, the Imãms and other friends of Allãh.

Question: How can rules of the *sharī'ah* go against the dictates of reason, in situations where reason may have a say?

Reply: True that reason may judge the virtue or vice of an action wherever it is possible for it to do so. But that thing or action should first come within its jurisdiction before it can pronounce its judgment on it. And we have explained earlier that such actions (as described in the above tradition) are governed by the third system, and that system takes such actions out of the jurisdiction of human intellect and reason – reason does not have any say against or about them. It is the way of the Divine Knowledge. Apparently the prophet Ismã'īl (a.s.) had given that man unconditional promise by saying, 'I shall wait for you here until you come back to me.' Therefore, he stuck to that unconditional wording, to save himself from breaking

the promise, and to fulfil what Allãh had put in his mind and made his tongue utter. Of the same import is an event related about the Prophet that he was near the Sacred Mosque when one of his companions told him that he would come back to him, and the Prophet promised to wait for him until he would return. That man went away and did not return, and the Prophet remained there three days waiting for him in the same place which he had promised. That man passed by that place after three days and found the Prophet sitting there waiting for him and he himself had forgotten the promise.

as-Sayyid ar-Raḍi has narrated from the Leader of the faithfuls (‘Ali - a.s.) that he heard someone saying: "*Surely we are Allãh's and to Him shall we surely return.*" Thereupon, he (‘Ali - a.s.) said: "O man! Verily our word, *Surely we are Allãh's, is* acknowledgment by us that we belong to Him, and, *to Him shall we surely return, is* acknowledgment by us that we are to die." (*al-Khaṣã'iṣ*)

The author says: Its meaning is clear in the light of the earlier given explanation. The tradition has been narrated in detail in *al-Kãfī.*

Isḥãq ibn ‘Ammãr and ‘Abdullãh ibn Sinãn have narrated from aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) that he said: "The Messenger of Allãh (s.a. w.a.) has said: ‘Allãh, the Mighty, the Great, has said: "I have given the world as loan to My servants. Then whoever gives Me a loan from it, I give him ten times to seven-hundred times in lieu of one. And whoever does not give Me a loan and I take something from him by force, then I give him three things that if I gave one of them to My angels they would be pleased of Me." ' " Then Abu ‘Abdillãh said: "(It is) the words of Allãh: *Who, when a misfortune befalls them, say: ‘Surely we are Allãh's and to Him we shall surely return.' Those are they on whom are blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those are the followers of the right course.*" Then Abu ‘Abdillãh (a.s.) said: "It is for the man from whom Allãh takes something forcibly." (*al-Kãfī*)

The author says: This tradition is narrated by other chains, all having nearly the same theme.

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said: "*aṣ-Ṣalãh* (اَلصَّلٰوةُ) from Allãh is mercy, and from the angels is purification, and from the people is prayer." (*Ma'ãni 'l-akhbãr*)

The author says: There are other traditions of the same meaning.

At first glance, there appears to be a conflict between this and the preceding tradition. This tradition explains *aṣ-ṣalãh* as mercy, while the preceding one counts *aṣ-ṣalãh* as other than mercy; and this view is further strengthened by the wording of the verse itself which mentions *aṣ-ṣalãh* and mercy separately, "blessings and mercy from Allãh". But in fact there is no contradiction as we have explained in detail in the Commentary.

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إِنَّ ٱلصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ حَجَّ الْبَيْتَ أَوِ ٱعْتَمَرَ
فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَا وَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْراً فَإِنَّ اللهَ شَاكِرٌ
عَلِيمٌ — ١٥٨ .

Surely the Ṣafã and the Marwah are among the signs of Allãh; so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or performs ‘umrah *thereof, there is no blame on him to go round them both; and whoever on his own accord does good, then surely Allãh is Grateful, All-knowing* (158).

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GENERAL COMMENT

The Ṣafã and the Marwah are two places in Mecca between which a pilgrim has to perform *as-sa‘y* (اَلسَّعْيُ = the ceremony of walking quickly seven times between the Ṣafã and the Marwah, during the *ḥajj* and the *‘umrah;* literally to move quickly, to run). These are two hills, the distance between them reportedly being 760½ arm. *aṣ-Ṣafã* (الصَّفَا = hard smooth rock) ; *al-Marwah* (اَلمَرْوَةُ = hard stone). *ash-Sha‘ã’ir* (اَلشَّعَائِرُ) is the plural of *ash-sha‘īrah* (اَلشَّعِيرَةُ = sign) ; from it is derived the word *al-mash‘ar* (المَشْعَرُ = the *ḥajj* station, east of Mecca) ; also they say, *ash‘ara ’l-hady* (أَشْعَرَ الهَدْيَ = he marked or branded the sacrifical animal). *Al-Ḥajj* (الحَجُّ) literally means repeated intention; in Islamic terminology it refers to the special rites collectively known as Pilgrimage of Mecca. *al-I‘timãr* (اَلإعْتِمَارُ) means to visit; it is derived from *al- ‘imarah* (العِمَارَةُ = building)

because buildings thrive by visits; in Islamic language it refers to the so-called “lesser pilgrimage” to the Ka‘bah, which unlike the *ḥajj,* need not be performed at a particular time and whose performance involves fewer ceremonies. *al-Junãḥ* (الجُنَاحُ) is deviation from truth and justice; it is used for sin and misdemeanour; thus, negation of sin or blame implies permission. *at-Taṭawwuf* (اَلتَّطَوُّفُ) is derived from *aṭ-ṭawf* (الطَّوْفُ) , that is, to make the rounds; it denotes a round trip, that is, a journey or walk that ends at its starting point; it need not necessarily be a circumambulation around something (although circumambulation is more obvious application of the word) ; it is the former meaning in which it has been used in this verse – it refers to *as-sa‘y,* that is, walking between the Ṣafã and the Marwah seven times consecutively.

at-Taṭawwu‘ (اَلتَّطَوُّعُ) is derived from *aṭ-ṭaw‘* (اَلطَّوْعُ = to do a walk willingly and gladly). Some people differentiate between *at-taṭawwu‘* and *al-iṭã‘ah* (اَلإطَاعَةُ) and say that the former, unlike the latter, is exclusively used for voluntarily done good deeds. If correct, this assertion might be based on the view that the obligatory deeds – because of their obligatoriness – are probably not done willingly, unlike the voluntary and recommended actions which are done willingly by one’s own accord. But it is a far-fetched interpretation. In fact, *aṭ-ṭaw‘* (اَلطَّوْعُ) is opposite of *al-kurh* (اَلكُرْهُ = dislike), and is not irreconcilable with obligatory deeds. Allãh says: . . . *so He said to it* (*i.e.,* the heaven) *and to the earth: “Come both, willingly or unwillingly”* (41:11) . The characteristic meaning of the paradigm *at-tafa‘‘ul* (اَلتَّفَعُّلُ) is to take to oneself, for example, *tamayyaza* (تَمَيَّزَ = he took on distin-guishing), *ta‘allama* (تَعَلَّمَ = he took on learning) ; in the same way *taṭawwa‘a* (تَطَوَّعَ) means, he took on doing good willingly. In short, *at-taṭawwu‘ is* not reserved, from the linguistic point of view, for voluntary, non-obligatory good deed – unless credit is given to the usage of the common people.

COMMENTARY

QUR'ÃN: *Surely the Ṣafã and the Marwah are among the signs of Allãh . . . to go round them both:* The two hills are marked by the signs of Allãh; they lead accordingly to Him and remind one of Him. They have been especially counted "among the signs of Allãh" to the exclusion of other things; it shows that the word, "the signs" has not been used here in the sense in which every created thing is a sign of the Creator. They are the Divine Signs because Allãh has made them so, by appointing them as the places of His worship; thus they remind one of Allãh, the Creator. They are the signs for which Allãh has prescribed especial rites of worship.

Then comes the next sentence: "so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or performs *'umrah* thereof, there is no blame on him to go round them both. The word "so" in the beginning shows that it is an offshoot of the preceding sentence. Its import is to show that walking quickly between these two hills is a part of the Islamic *sharī'ah* – it does not imply that the said walking is voluntary or non-obligatory. If Allãh had wanted to declare its voluntariness, it would have been more appropriate to praise and extol *as-sa'y,* rather than saying that there was no blame in it. The gist of the meaning is that – because the Ṣafã and the Marwah were among the places of the worship of Allãh – it would do you no harm to worship Him therein. And it is the language of legislation. If Allãh had wanted to show only its desirability, He would have said that, because the two hills were among the signs of Allãh, He likes you to go round them.

Frequently, when the Qur'ãn wants to ordain an obligatory law, it uses such expressions which by themselves do not show obligatoriness. For example, Allãh says regarding *jihãd; that is better for you* (61:11); regarding fast: *and that you fast is better for you* (2:184), and regarding shortening of prayer: *And when you journey in the earth, there is no blame on you if you shorten the prayer* (4:101).

QUR'ÃN: *and whoever on his own accord does good, then surely Allãh is Grateful, All-knowing:* The conjunctive "and" may be joining this sentence to any of the three phrases in the preceding one:-

1. It may connect it with "so whoever makes a pilgrimage . . . ". In that case it would show a more general reason for the legislation of the walking between the two hills, after giving the particular reason, that is, "Surely the Ṣafã and the Marwah are among the signs of Allãh." According to this interpretation, "doing good on one's own accord" would mean "obedience" in general term, and not a voluntary deed.

2. It may be starting a new sentence, joining it to the words in the beginning of the verse. In that case, "doing good on one's own accord" would refer to the "going round the two hills". Thus it would show only the desirability of *as-sa'y* (walking quickly seven times between Ṣafã and the Marwah).

3. Alternatively, the phrase "doing good on one's own according" may be referring to the *ḥajj* and the *'umrah,* and the phrase would show the desirability of these two rites of worship.

ash-Shãkir (اَلشَّاكِرُ = Grateful) and *al-'Alīm* (اَلعَلِيْمُ = All-knowing) are two of the beautiful names of Allãh. *ash-Shukr* (اَلشُّكْرُ = gratefulness, thankfulness). When a beneficiary returns the benevolence of the benefactor by announcing it in words and/ or deeds, it is called gratefulness.

Someone gives you a property, and in return you praise him mentioning his benevolence, or use that property in a way he likes – and thus you show your gratefulness to him.

Now, Allãh is the Beneficent; His beneficence is eternal and all beneficence begins from Him; none can oblige Him in any way so that He would be grateful to that person. Yet, He, in His benevolence, looks at His creatures' good deeds as though the creatures have been beneficent to Him by doing those deeds (although, in reality the case is diametrically different; the creatures' good deeds are actually His benefaction to them). And thus he repays those good deeds with gratefulness and benevolence, which in fact is a double benevolence. Allãh says: *Is the reward*

of goodness aught but goodness? (55:60)*; Surely this is a reward for you, and your striving shall be recompensed* (76:22). Thus, the name "Grateful" is used for Allãh in its real, not allegorical sense.

TRADITIONS

One of our companions has narrated this tradition from aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.). He says: "I asked him about walking between the Ṣafã and the Marwah whether it was obligatory or voluntary. He said: 'Obligatory.' I said: 'Does not Allãh say: *so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or performs* 'umrah *thereof, there is no blame on him to go round them both?'* He said: 'It was in the *'umrah* of *Qaḍã'**; that is, the Messenger of Allãh (s.a.w.a.) had stipulated with them (i.e., the pagans of Mecca) that they would remove the idols (for the period of *'umrah*) ; and one of his companions was engaged otherwise until the idols were returned (to their places): (The Imãm) said : 'Then Allãh revealed: *Surely the Ṣafã and the Marwah are among the signs of Allãh; so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or performs* 'umrah *thereof, there is no blame on him to go round them both, i.e.,* even when there were idols on them.' " (al-'Ayyãshī)

The author says: A nearly similar tradition is found in *al-Kãfī.*

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) says describing the *ḥajj* of the Prophet : "After circumambulating around the House and praying its two *rak'ahs,* (the Prophet) recited: *Surely the Ṣafã and the Marwah are among the signs of Allãh.* (Then he said:) 'So I shall begin with that which Allãh, the Mighty, the Great, has begun with (i.e., from the Ṣafã).' And verily the Muslims used to think that walking between the Said and the Marwah was something invented by the polytheists; so Allãh revealed: *Surely the Safã and the Marwah are among the signs of Allãh; so whoever makes a pilgrimage or performs* 'umrah *thereof, there is no blame on him to go round*

1. In the 7th year of *hijrah.* (*tr.*)

them both." (al-Kãfī)

The author says: Obviously, there is no contradiction between the two traditions regarding the reason of the revelation of the verse. The words of the Prophet, "I shall begin with that which Allãh, the Mighty, the Great, has begun with", show the basis of legislation. We have narrated, in the story of Hãjar and her running seven times between the Ṣafã and the Marwah, that the ritual of *as-sa'y* started from that.

'Ãmir ash-Sha'bī said: "There was an idol, called *Asãf,* on the Ṣafã, and another, called *Nã'ilah,* on the Marwah. The people of (the days of) ignorance, after circumambulating the House, used to walk between the two (hills) and touch and wipe the two idols. When the Messenger of Allãh (peace be on him) arrived at Mecca, they (i.e., the Muslims) said: 'O Messenger of Allãh! (As for) the Ṣafã and the Marwah, surely the walking around them was done because of the two idols, and walking around them is not among the signs (of Allãh).' Then Allãh revealed: *Surely the Safã and the Marwah. . .* Thus, He (especially) mentioned the Ṣafã because of the idol that was on it, and affirmed the Marwah because of the idol that rose from it." (*ad-Durru '1-manthũr*)

The author says: Both sects have narrated numerous traditions having the above-mentioned themes. Their implication is that the verse was revealed in the year when the Muslims performed the *ḥajj,* while the Chapter of the Cow is the first one revealed at Medina. It may therefore be inferred that the verses are unconnected with the preceding verses (of the *qiblah*) which were revealed, as described earlier, in the second year of *hijrah;* nor are they related to the verses in the beginning of the chapter which were revealed in the first year of *hijrah.* It shows that the verses were revealed in various contexts, not in one.

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إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَى مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ
لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ أُولَئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّاعِنُونَ ــ ١٥٩. إِلَّا الَّذِينَ
تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَبَيَّنُوا فَأُولَئِكَ أَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ــ ١٦٠ .
إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةُ اللهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ
وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ ــ ١٦١ . خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا
هُمْ يُنْظَرُونَ ــ ١٦٢ .

Surely those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance that We revealed after We made it clear for men in the Book, these it is whom Allãh does curse, and those who curse do curse them (too) (159), *Except those who repent and amend and make manifest* (the truth), *these it is to whom I turn* (mercifully), *and I am the Oft-returning* (to mercy), *the Merciful* (160). *Surely those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, these it is on whom is the curse of Allãh and the angels and men all* (161); *Abiding in it; their chastisement shall not be lightened nor shall they be given respite* (162).

* * * * *

COMMENTARY

QUR'ÃN: *Surely those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance that We revealed:* Obviously "the guidance" means

that knowledge and *sharī'ah* which the Divine Religion contains, and which lead the followers to the eternal bliss; and "the clear proofs" means the verses, signs and the arguments which are the clear evidence, proofs and attestations for the truth – the truth that is guidance. "The clear proofs", as used in the Divine Speech, is a special description for the revealed verses. Therefore, concealing the clear proofs may mean hiding the verses themselves from the people; or concealing their true meaning through misinterpretation and misapplication – as the leaders of the Jews did with the verses prophesying the advent of the Prophet. What the people did not know, they concealed; and what they knew, they misinterpreted and diverted it from the Prophet.

QUR'ÃN: *after We made it clear for men:* It shows that they concealed the truth after Allãh made it clear for all the mankind, not only for the Jews. It is not feasible, in the prevalent world system, to explain a thing to each and every person individually – not only in revelation but in every general announcement. As a general rule, only a few persons are informed of the matter directly, and it is through them that the rest of the people get the information; he who is present conveys the message to the absent persons; the learned one explains it to the ignorant. The knowledgeable man is counted as one of the links to convey the message, like the tongue and speech. When a learned man, bound by the pledge taken from him, explains the message to others, he makes the truth clear to the people. If he hides his knowledge, he keeps the truth concealed from the people, after it was made clear to them. And, as Allãh has said, it is the only thing which has made people differ in matters of religion, and has diverted them from the path of guidance to that of misguidance. Otherwise, religion conforms with nature; human nature agrees with it and discerning mind surrenders to it when it is properly explained. Allãh says: *Then set your face uprightly for the* (right) *religion in natural devotion* (to the truth) ; *the nature made by Allãh in which He has made men; there is no alteration* (by anyone else) *in the creation of Allãh; that is the right* (established) *religion, but most people do not know* (30:30). So, the religion is natural;

nature can never resist it, if it appears before it with some clarity, either because of the purity of the recipient's heart, as is the case of the prophets, or because it is explained properly – the latter method invariable always depends on the former.

That is why the above-quoted verse combines the two premises: the naturalness of religion and lack of its knowledge. It says: *the nature made by Allãh in which He has made men;* and then says: *but most people do not know.*

Again Allãh says: *Mankind was but one people, so Allãh sent the prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He sent down with them the book with truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they had differed. And none differed about it but the very people who were given it, after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves.. .* (2:213). It shows that difference about the contents of the book emanates from the revolt of the scholars who already have its knowledge. Religious differences and deviations from the right path are caused by the revolt of the religious scholars as they conceal the revealed truth, misinterpret it and alter it; and because of their injustice. That is how "injustice" will be defined on the Day of Resurrection. Allãh says: *Then a crier will cry out among them that the curse of Allãh is on the unjust, who hinder* (people) *from Allãh's way and seek to make it crooked .. .* (7:44 - 5) . There are many verses of the same theme.

Clearly, the verse under discussion (*Surely those who conceal the clear proofs . . .*) *is* based on the above-quoted verse: *Mankind was but one people, so Allãh sent the prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He sent down with them the book with truth, so that it might judge between the people in that in which they differed. And none differed about it but the very people who were given it, after clear signs had come to them, revolting among themselves. . .* (2:213).

And it points to the recompense of that revolt in the next sentence, "these it is whom Allãh does curse . . ."

QUR'ÃN: *these it is whom Allãh does curse, and those who curse do curse them* (too). It describes the punishment of those who revolt against truth and hide the Book and the guidance which Allãh has

sent down. The punishment is the curse by Allãh and the curse by those who curse. The word "curse" has been repeated because the curse of Allãh is different from the curse of those who curse. The curse by Allãh is removal from mercy and bliss, and that by those who curse is praying to Allãh to remove the cursed one from that mercy and bliss.

There is no restriction at all on the curse of Allãh or the curse of those who curse, nor is there any limitation on "those who curse". This generality shows that every curse by anyone who curses is actually directed to those revolters and concealers of the Divine Proof and Guidance. And reason supports this view: The aim of the curse is to remove the cursed one from happiness and bliss; and there is no real happiness and bliss except the religious one. As this real religious bliss is fully explained by Allãh and accepted by nature, no one can be deprived of it except the one who rejects and denies it. This deprivation is confined to him who knows it and then knowingly rejects it. It does not affect him who did not know the said religious bliss and to whom it was not clarified. Allãh has taken pledge from learned people to spread their knowledge and to publish whatever Divine proofs and guidance they had received. If they conceal it and hold it back, then in effect they have rejected it. Therefore, "these it is whom Allãh does curse, and those who curse do curse them (too)". This explanation is further supported by the following verse: "Surely those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, these it is on whom is the curse of Allãh and the angels and men all." Apparently, the particle *inna* (إِنَّ = surely) coming at the beginning of the verse gives the reason, or intensifies the theme, of the verse under discussion, by repeating its meaning in other words, "Surely those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers . . ."

QUR'ÃN : *Except those who repent . . . the Merciful:* It is the exception from the preceding verse. It qualifies their repentance with amending and making manifest the truth. They must make their previous behaviour known; they must announce their repentance.

In other words, they must announce to the people what they were concealing of the truth, and also make it known that previously they had concealed it. Otherwise, it will be as though they have not repented yet – because they are still hiding the fact of their previous concealment of the truth.

QUR'ÃN: *Surely those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers, these it is on whom is the curse of Allãh and the angels and men all.* It alludes to their persistence in disbelief and their obstinate and stubborn refusal to accept the truth. (If a man does not accept the true religion, not because of obstinacy and arrogance, but because it was not made clear to him, then in reality he is not a disbeliever, he is *al-mustaḍ'af* (المُسْتَضْعَفُ = weak; according to Islamic terminology, a man who does not have true faith, but is not inimical to it] ; his judgment is in the hand of Allãh.) This theme is supported by the fact that most of the verses describing the disbelief qualify it with "belying". Look especially at the verses of the descent of Ãdam, containing the first law legislated for the mankind: *We said: "Get down you therefrom all together; and if there comes to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve. And* (as to) *those who disbelieve in and belie Our signs, they are the inmates of fire, in it they shall abide."* (2:39-40)

Likewise, in this verse the words, "Those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers," refer to those who obstinately belie the signs and guidance of Allãh – those who conceal what Allãh has revealed. And Allãh describes their recompense in these words: "these it is on whom is the curse of Allãh and the angels and men all". It is a Divine Decree that every curse by anyone from among the angels or men, without any exception, shall be attached to them only. In this respect they are like the Satan, when Allãh told him: *And surely on you is curse until the Day of Judgment* (15:35). Thus, Allãh made him the target of every curse from whatever source it may emanate. Likewise, these learned persons who conceal their knowledge are partners of Satan in this general and unrestricted curse. See how hard is the tone of

this verse, and how formidable its theme! We shall write something related to it, Allãh willing, under the verse: *That Allãh may separate the impure from the pure, and put the impure, some of it upon the other, and pile it up together, then cast it into the hell; these it is that are the losers.* (8:37).

QUR'ÃN: *Abiding in it* (*i.e.,* in the curse), *their chastisement shall not be lightened nor shall they be given respite.* The word "curse", has been changed here to "chastisement"; it shows that the curse shall be converted into their chastisement on that Day.

In these verses, the references to Allãh have been changed several times from the first person to the third and vice versa. The verse begins with the first person pronouns: "We revealed", "We made it clear"; then the style changes, mentioning Allãh by name, "Allãh does curse". The change was affected because the theme demands show of intense displeasure, and the greater the name of the displeased person, the more severe the effect of the displeasure – and none is greater than Allãh. Therefore, the action of the curse was attributed to Him by name, to give it the most vehement force. Then the reference was again changed to the first person pronouns, "I turn (mercifully) ; and I am the Oft-returning (to mercy) . . ." It was done to show the highest mercy and benevolence of Allãh – every adjective is discarded, all attributes are set aside and "I Myself return to them mercifully". You will appreciate the difference if you read this sentence thus: These it is to whom Allãh turns mercifully; or thus: These it is to whom their Lord turns mercifully. Obviously, these sentences do not show that high degree of mercy that reflects from this sentence, "these it is to whom I turn (mercifully)". The next verse again discards the pronoun for the Divine Name, "these it is on whom is the curse of Allãh"; and the reason is the same as was explained for the change in the first verse.

TRADITIONS

One of our companions has narrated from aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.). He says: "I said to him: 'Tell me about the word of Allãh, the

Mighty, the High: *Surely those who conceal. . .*'. He said: 'We are meant by it – and to Allãh is the resort for help. When (*Imãmah*) comes to one of us (i.e., the Imãms), he has no authority (or, choice) but to make it clear for the men who will be (Imãm) after him.' " (al- 'Ayyãshī)

al-Bãqir (a.s.) said about this verse: "(Allãh) means us by it, and to Allãh is the resort for help."

Muhammad ibn Muslim said: "(The Imãm) said: 'These are the People of the Book.' "

The author says: All these traditions are based on the principle of the flow of the Qur'ãn and its application. Otherwise, the verse is general.

Some traditions quote 'Ali (a.s.) as saying: "Its interpretation is the learned people when they are depraved."

The Prophet said about this verse: "Whoever is asked about knowledge which he has got, and he conceals it, he shall be reined on the Day of Resurrection with a bridle of fire; and it is (the import of) His words, *these it is whom Allãh does curse and those who curse do curse them* (too)." (*Majma'u 'l-bayãn*)

The author says: These two traditions confirm what we have written in the Commentary.

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said explaining the words of Allãh, *and those who curse do curse them* (too) : "We are those (who curse) ; and they say that it means the vermins of the earth." (al-'Ayyãshī)

The author says: The explanation given by the Imãm reminds one of the import of the verse: . . . *and the witnesses shall say: "These are they who lied against their Lord." Now surely the curse of Allãh is on the unjust* (11:18). The Imãms are the witnesses, allowed by Allãh to speak on the Day of Judgment, who speak the right thing. The Imãm also mentioned some people's explanation that *those who curse* refers to the vermins of the earth. This interpretation is attributed to the exegetes like Mujãhid, 'Ikrimah and others; and some traditions ascribe it to the Prophet.

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said: about the verse, *Surely those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance,* (that it means the proofs and guidance) “regarding ‘Ali.” (*ibid.*)

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وَإِلٰهُكُمْ إِلٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمٰنُ الرَّحِيمُ ـــ ١٦٣ .
إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمٰوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ
الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ
مَاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ
الرِّيَاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ
يَعْقِلُونَ ـــ ١٦٤ . وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِ اللهِ أَنْدَادًا يُحِبُّونَهُمْ
كَحُبِّ اللهِ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلّٰهِ وَلَوْ يَرَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِذْ
يَرَوْنَ الْعَذَابَ أَنَّ الْقُوَّةَ لِلّٰهِ جَمِيعًا وَأَنَّ اللهَ شَدِيدُ الْعَذَابِ ـــ ١٦٥ .
إِذْ تَبَرَّأَ الَّذِينَ اتُّبِعُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا وَرَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ وَتَقَطَّعَتْ
بِهِمُ الْأَسْبَابُ ـــ ١٦٦ . وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا لَوْ أَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً فَنَتَبَرَّأَ
مِنْهُمْ كَمَا تَبَرَّءُوا مِنَّا كَذٰلِكَ يُرِيهِمُ اللهُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ حَسَرَاتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ وَمَا
هُمْ بِخَارِجِينَ مِنَ النَّارِ ـــ ١٦٧ .

And your God is one God! there is no god but ***He; He is the Beneficent,*** *the Merciful* (163). *Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and the ships that run in the sea with that which profits men, and the water that Allãh sends down from the cloud, then gives life with it to the earth after its death and spreads in it all* (kinds of)

animals, and the changing of the winds, and the clouds made subservient between the heaven and the earth, there are signs for a people who understand (164). *And there are some among men who take for them-selves equals to God besides Allãh, whom they love as the love for Allãh, and those who believe are stronger in* (their) *love for Allãh, and O that those who are unjust could see, when they see the chastisement, that the power is wholly Allãh's and that Allãh is severe in chastisement* (165). *When those who were followed shall renounce those who followed* (them), *and they see the chastisement and their ties are cut asunder* (166). *And those who followed shall say: "O were there for us a return, then we would renounce them as they have renounced us." Thus will Allãh show them their deeds to be intense regret to them, and they shall not come forth from the fire* (167).

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COMMENTARY

These verses are connected together in one context, with a single theme. They remind the audience about the belief of monotheism offering proofs to support it, and describe polytheism and its ultimate result.

QUR'ÃN: *And your God is one God:* We have explained the meaning of *al-ilãh* (الاِلٰهُ = god) in the Commentary of the first verse of the first chapter, the Opening. Oneness is a self-evident idea, which needs no explanation. A thing is called one in view of one of its attributes, for example, one man, one scholar or one poet. These words show that the related attribute is indivisible, and not subject to plurality. For example, the manhood of one man, Zayd, is not shared between him and someone else. It is in contrast with manhood of two men – Zayd and 'Amr, for example – which is shared by the two, and is therefore numerous. Thus Zayd, in context of his attribute of manhood, is one and indivisible

and not subject to plurality. But when he is looked at in this very context combined with his other attributes – like his knowledge, power, life, etc. – then he is not one; he is a multiple in reality.

Allãh is One, in view of His attribute, like His divinity, which is not shared by anyone else. He is one in His divinity as well as in His knowledge, power and life. He has knowledge, unlike other knowledges, and power and life unlike others' powers and lives. Also, He is one because His attributes are not multiple, they are not separate from one another except in their verbal meanings; His knowledge, His power and His life, all is one thing, all is His very person; none of them is separate from the other. Allãh knows by His power, and has power by His life, and is alive by His know-ledge. He is not like other things where attributes are multiple and numerous not only in meanings but in reality also.

Sometimes a thing possesses the characteristic of oneness in its personality, that is, by its very nature and essence, it cannot accept multiplication or division in its self; it cannot be divided into various parts or into its person and name etc. This oneness is called oneness of person, and it is referred to with the word *al-aḥad* (اَلأَحَدُ = one) ; this word is never used except as a first construct of a genitive construction or in a negative, prohibitive or similar sentences, in the meaning of no one, any one, etc. For example, we say: No one came to me. This sentence negates the personality itself, irrespective of its oneness or plurality, because this oneness is related to its nature and essence, and not to its attribute. This connotation will be lost if we were to say, one man did not come to me. This sentence does not imply that two or more men did not come; it is because "oneness" in this sentence is an attribute of the corner, not of his person.

The reader should keep in mind this short explanation until we write about it in detail. Allãh willing, under the verse: *Say: "He, Allãh, is One."* (112:1)

The words, "And your God is one God," imply that divinity, godhead, is exclusively reserved for Allãh, and that His oneness in divinity is such as becomes His sublime status.

The word *al-wãḥid* (اَلوَاحِدُ = the one), as understood by the audience of the Qur'ãn, gives the idea of oneness, of a general type

That meaning may be applied to various kinds of oneness. But only a few of those connotations may be applied for Allãh. The word “one”, may show oneness of number, of species, or of genes, etc. And the people were bound to take it in the meaning best suited to their beliefs and ideas. That is why the Qur’ãn did not say: And Allãh is one God. Because this sentence does not establish monotheism; even the polytheists say that He is one God, in the same way as each of their deities is one god.

Nor would have the sentence, And your God is one, established monotheism. Because it could be imagined that He is one in the species – of divinity. People say, when they enumerate the species of animals: Horse is one; mule is one – although horse and mule are manifold in number.

That is why the Qur’ãn said: “And your God is one God.” “One God” (in contrast to two or more gods) is made predicate of “Your God”. In this form the sentence clearly establishes the belief of monotheism, by restricting the godhead to one of the gods in which they believed.

QUR’ÃN: *there is no god but He:* It further emphasizes the clear declaration of the preceding sentence about monotheism and negates every possible misinterpretation or superstition. The negative particle “*lã*” (لا = no) is used here to negate the genes; *ilãh* (إلـه = god) denotes here real and actual God. The sentence has an implied predicate “existent”, and the meaning will be as follows: There is no real and actual god existing “but He”. The pronoun “He”, used in place of the proper name, Allãh, is in nominative, not subjunctive case. Therefore, the word “but” is not used here as particle of exception; rather it is an adjective in the sense of “other than”. The complete sentence, thus, means: There is no real god, other than Allãh, existing.

The sentence therefore aims at repudiation of gods, other than Allãh – the deities which had no real existence outside the imagination of their worshippers. It does not aim at refuting other deities and proving the existence of Allãh, as many scholars have thought. Our explanation is supported by the fact that the sentence needs only a negative mode, and not a negative followed

by affirmative. Only repudiation of other imaginary deities is enough to confirm the Oneness of Allãh in His godhead. Moreover, the Qur'ãn treats the existence of Allãh as a self-evident truth which needs no proof or argument. The Qur'ãn only cares to affirm and prove His attributes; for example, it only proves that Allãh is One; that He is the Creator, the Knower, the Powerful and so on.

Question: You say that the sentence has an implied predicate existent (or some other word of the same meaning). If so, then it would only negate the actual existence of other deities – but not the "possibility" of their existence.

Reply: 1. It is meaningless to suppose that there could be a "possible" or transient being (having equal relation with existence and non-existence), which would be the ultimate cause of all the existing things and their affairs.

2. We could change the predicate to "true" or "actual"; then the meaning would be: There is no god in reality other than He.

QUR'ÃN: *the Beneficent, the Merciful:* We have explained its meaning in the exegesis of the first verse of the first Chapter, the Opening. With these two names, the meaning of Allãh's Lordship becomes complete. From Him emanates every general bounty – pursuant to His Beneficence – and every special favour, in the way of guidance and the next world's bliss – pursuant to His Mercy.

QUR'ÃN: *Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth . . . :* As mentioned in the beginning, the verse aims at proving what the preceding verse has established: "And your God is one God: there is no god but He; He is the Beneficent, the Merciful." The verse under discussion may be analyzed as follows: There is a god for each of these phenomena; there is only one God for all of them; and that one God is your God too; He is the Beneficent who bestows general bounties; and the Merciful, who leads to the ultimate happiness – the blessings of the next world.

These are the established facts; and in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and all the phenomena mentioned in this verse, there are signs to prove these facts for a people who understand.

The verse offers arguments to prove that there is a god, and He is one – the God of this magnificent universe is One, and He Himself is the God of man. It is not the import of this verse to prove the existence of the God of man, or His oneness. Otherwise, all the phenomena mentioned in it would have all together constituted only one sign – by showing that the management of all is inter-related and forms a single system. If so, then the preceding verse should have been restyled in this way: And your God is one, there is no god but He.

The proofs in short run are as follows:

First Proof: These heavens, the canopy high above us with all these awe-inspiring luminous stars, constellations and galaxies shining therein; this earth, our shelter and refuge, with all its wonderful natural systems; all these regular changes and alternations occurring in this world – the alternation of the day and the night, the running ships and boats, the pouring rains, the changing winds, the suspended clouds – all these things need by their very nature, a Creator. There is, therefore, a Creator God for all of them.

Second Proof: Look at these heavenly bodies, varying in mass from the minutest to the largest. There is one so small that the scientists have found its volume to be equal to: 0.000000000 0000000000000033 cubic cm.; while there are others so huge as to be equal to millions of our earth – which in itself has a diameter of about 9,000 miles. They have found the distance between some celestial bodies to be 3,000,000 light years. A light year is approximately 365 x 24 x 60 x 60 x 300,000 kilometres.[1]

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1. A light year is equal to 5,880,000 million miles. With tremendous advance in astronomy, it is now more usual to reckon distances in the parsec, which is equal to 3.258 light years, or 19,150,000 million miles. (*tr.*)

Ponder on these figures which boggle the mind and stupefy the brain. Then decide, as you wish to decide, about this unique and wonderful system. Keep in mind that each of these untold billions of the suns and planets act on, and react to,. the others, no matter where and how distant they are from each other. This goes on by the law of gravity, which permeates the whole universe, and through light and heat. In this way, the established system continues without any impediment. And it is an all-pervasive never stopping system, run according to an established law. Even the theory of relativity (which says that the directions of movements in the physical world are subject to deviations) affirms that that deviation itself is governed by another inviolable law.

This movement, this general rotation, appears in every part of the universe in a uniform way; look for example at the movement of the sun with its planets and satellites. Now look nearer at hand at our own earth, with its own moon and various systems (the day and the night, the winds, the clouds and the rains). Reduce your circle of vision once more, to ponder on earthly matters and creatures – minerals, vegetables, animals and various other things. Find out about countless species one after another; then go on reducing the circle until you come to the elements, then to the atoms; then the particles of the atoms; finally you shall come to what is today the last stage of the scientific discovery, that is, the electron and the proton. Even there you will find a miniature solar system at work; a nucleus around which these smallest particles revolve, exactly like the movement of the planets around their suns, and the endless journey of the suns (with their families) towards an unknown destination.

Stop at any stage in this scientific journey and you will find an amazing system – a system whose wonders will never cease and whose marvels will never stop. There is no exception in its flow, not even one; nor is there any question of chance in its intricately-woven design, not even a rare one. Man cannot reach its shore, nor does he fully comprehend all the signs on this path.

Proceed from the smallest to the largest heavenly body. You will find it a single universe with one and unified system and inter-related arrangement. Look through the most powerful

far-reaching telescope and use the most advanced observatory, you will find the same law governing all celestial bodies.

Now, reverse your journey, until you reach again to the smallest unit. Break it down to its parts, reaching to molecule. You will find in it a miniature universe, with the same design and the same inter-related arrangement – although the two vastly differ in their natures and identities.

In short, the universe is one, and its arrangement and management inter-related; all its parts – no matter how diverse and multiple they may be – are managed under a single system; *and the faces are humbled before the Living, the Self-subsistent God* (20:111). Therefore, the God of the universe, is one; He alone created and He alone manages it.

Third Proof: Man is an earthly creature. He lives on the earth and after his death returns to it. His existence and life needs nothing more than the above-mentioned system that governs the whole universe – a unified and inter-related system. The heavenly bodies with the light and heat they generate, the earth with its alternated days and nights, the winds, the clouds and the rains, the beneficial goods it produces and which are transported from region to region – these are the things man requires for his physical needs, for his existence and continuation of life. *And Allãh en-compasses them on every side* (85:20). It proves that the God who created the universe and manages its affairs is the same God who also created man and manages his affairs. God of the universe is the God of man.

Again, it is God who bestows on every thing what it needs for happiness of this world and for bliss of the next (if he is qualified for the bliss of the next life) – because the next world is the ultimate destination of this abode. How can anyone man-age the end of any affair other than he who manages the affair itself? This is the proof given by the two names, *The Beneficent, the Merciful.*

And in this way is perfected the rational argument offered by this verse for the preceding one. This view is strengthened by the fact that this verse begins with the particle *inna* (إِنَّ = surely) which is also used for offering arguments. And Allãh knows better.

In short, the words, “Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth”, point to the heavens with all their luminary bodies, and the earth with all the wonderful creations and astounding products it contains; the forms which give each species its name, the matter which constitutes its body; their transformation from one form to the other, their recurring additions and subtractions, their joining together and breaking apart. As Allãh says: *Do they not see that We come into the land curtailing it of its sides?* (13:41); *Do not those who disbelieve see that the heavens and the earth were closed up, so We have opened them: and We have made of water every thing living. . .* ? (21:30)

QUR’ÃN: *and the alternation of the night and the day:* It refers to the changes in durations of the nights and the days which are caused by a combination of two factors: First is the daily rotation of the earth on its axis. This always keeps a little more than half of the earth’s sphere facing towards the sun, which sends light and heat to the earth’s surface – and that is called the day. The opposite side of the sphere is dark, throwing a conical shade in the space – and it is the night. The day and the night are continuously rotating on the face of the earth.

The second factor is the revolution of the earth on its orbit around the sun. The earth’s axis does not form a right angle with the orbit ; it has a tilt (of 23½° [*tr.*]) ; and because of that tilt the earth’s north-south position *vis-à-vis* the sun changes at different times of the year; when the northern hemisphere is inclined to the sun, it is summer in the north and winter in the south; when the southern hemisphere is inclined to the sun, the north experiences winter and the south, summer. Also, it is because of this tilt that the equator and the North and the South Poles always have days and nights of equal length: The two Poles have only one day and one night in a year – each night and each day being six months long. When it is day on the North Pole, the South Pole has its night, and vice versa. As for the equator, it has about 365 days and 365 nights in a solar year – all of equal length. As for the other regions, the days and the nights differ – in number as well as in length, depending on their distance from the equator and

the two Poles. Full description of this phenomenon may be found in the sciences concerned.

It is because of this difference that the sun's life-giving light and heat reach various regions of the earth with varying intensity. This in its turn creates diversity in various factors governing the earth and its environment. And man profits from that diversity in numerous ways.

QUR'ÃN: *And the ships that run in the sea with that which profits men: al-Fulk* (الفُلْكُ) is boat, ship; it is used for singular and plural both. *al-Fulk* and *al-fulkah* (الفُلْكَةُ) have the same meaning; as *at-tamr* and *at-tamrah* (اَلتَّمْرُ، التَّمْرَةُ = date) are synonymous. "that which profits men", refers to various types of cargoes and food items which are transported by ship from coast to coast, from region to region.

The verse counts the ships (which are made by man) side by side with those things and natural phenomena which are beyond human power, like the heavens, the earth and the alternation of the day and the night. It shows that ultimately the ships too, like those natural phenomena, are the handiwork of Allãh. On deep consideration, when we ascribe a work to a man, it has no more significance than ascribing it to a natural cause. Of course, man has a free will and power. But he is not a sufficient or total cause; nor does that freedom make him independent of Allãh. He is as much in need of Allãh's will and permission as any other natural cause. A natural cause acts on, and reacts with, a matter and through a process of combination and break up gives it a form – let us say, turns it into a rock. A man cuts, breaks up and joins some matters giving them a form – let us say, turn them into a boat. Is there any difference between the two makers? Both ultimately draw their strength and ability from Divine creation and invention; nothing is independent of Allãh either in its person or in its activities.

Boat too, like all physical creations, depends on Allãh in its existence, as well as in management of its affairs. Allãh has pointed to this fact in the verse, where Ibrãhīm (a.s.) is quoted as telling his people about the idols which they worshipped as

god: *And Allãh has created you and what you make* (37:96). Admittedly, an idol is but a thing made by man, and Ibrãhīm (a.s.) ascribes its making to Allãh. The same applies to the boats and ships. Also, Allãh says: *And His are the ships reared aloft in the sea like mountains* (55:24). According to this verse, the ships belong to Allãh. Again, He says: *and He has made the ships subservient to you, that they might run their course in the sea by His command . . .* (14:32). This verse declares that also the ships' affairs is in Allãh's hands.

CAN MAN-MADE THINGS BE ATTRIBUTED TO ALLAH

How heedless are those who think that the things made and manufactured by man are exclusively his creation and can-not be attributed to Allãh at all – just because they are made by man's will and choice !

First, in this group are the materialists who do not believe in a Creator. They say: The theists believed in a Creator because they found in the nature many things and happenings whose material cause they did not know. As they knew that nothing could happen without a cause, they had to admit that there was a cause for such things and happenings, which was not known to them yet. In this way they came to believe that there was, for those things of unknown cause, a cause whose reality was hidden from them and which was beyond the natural world – and that cause was God. According to the materialists, the belief in the existence of a Creator was a hypothesis which emanated from the ignorance of the primitive man: that man was surrounded by so many phenomena of unknown causes; for example, atmospheric changes and many happenings on the earth. Likewise, there were many psychological factors (whose natural causes are unknown to the science even today). And this resulted in the belief in a supernatural Creator.

They say: Now the sciences have succeeded in unravelling many mysteries of natural phenomena, and in identifying their

natural causes. Thus, one of the two pillars of the above-mentioned hypothesis has been pulled down – that is, the need of some natural phenomena for a super-natural cause. Now remains the other pillar – that is, the need of some psychological factors for an immaterial cause. The recent advances in the field of the organic chemistry, give us hope that man will soon understand the mysteries of the soul; then he will be able to manufacture the life-giving cells and germs. This will enable him to create any living being and bring about any psychological effect. Then the second pillar of this hypothesis will go down – and there will remain no basis for believing in a super-natural Creator. Man will create whatever he wishes of spiritual and psychological effects, as he is making today whatever he likes of the physical and material things – although just yesterday he was insisting that there was a hypothetical super-natural cause for these things. Now we know why he held that belief – it was just because he did not know the real cause of these phenomena.

COMMENTS: First: If these fat-heads were to wake up from their conceit, they would see that the theists from the very beginning of their belief in a Creator (and there never was a beginning for it) affirmed that creative cause for the whole universe – those things having known physical causes as well as those having unknown causes. According to them this whole lot, in its entirety, needs a cause, separate from the universe. Clearly what the materialists reject is not what the theists believe in.

The theists – and the history and the research has not been able to pin-point a starting point for the belief in the Creator, in the history of humanity – have believed in the existence of one or more creators for the whole universe, although the Qur'ãn has shown that the religion of monotheism appeared before poly-theism; and the orientalist, Max Muller, the pioneer in the studies of Sanskrit, also has thrown light upon it. Obviously, the theists, even the primitive man among them, used to see and recognize physical causes of many physical phenomena. Yet, they affirmed that there was a God for the whole universe (not excluding those phenomena of known causes). Evidently, when they believed in the existence

of the Creator, basing their argument on the all-pervasive system of cause-and-effect, it was not to solve the problem of some phenomena of which they could not find a cause. After all, they did not say that some parts of the universe needed a Creator, while others (having some known causes) did not need that. What they believed was this: The universe is made up of a series of natural causes and effects. This whole universe, taken as a composite unit, needs and requires a Cause, above all other causes; all actions and reactions, all causes and effects, interacting amongst its countless components, rely and depend on that Cause of the causes. The belief in that Supreme Cause does not negate the general law of causality which permeates all components of the universe. In the same way, the existence of material causes for the material effects does not make this whole chain of the causes and effects independent of the Supreme Cause, who is out of this universe and separate from it. (When we say 'out of this universe', we do not mean that the Supreme Cause is placed on the summit of the pyramid of the causes and effects. We mean that the Supreme Cause encompasses the whole universe with all its causes and effects, from every possible side.)

The materialists have fallen in an amusing contradiction. They believe that there is a general all-pervasive compulsion in all happenings in the world – including human actions. According to them, every action, every happening, is a compulsory, inescapable effect of various causes. And at the same time they say that if a man created another man, it would not finally end at the Cause of the universe – if there is such a cause.

This fine and deep theme is always present in the subconscious mind of common people (even if a simple man is unable to express it in so many words). That is why they say that the whole universe – together with all its causes and effects – is the creation of a Creator God.

Second: When the theist philosophers furnish the rational proofs to prove the existence of the Creator, they do so after establishing that there is an all-pervasive system of causality in the world. Then they proceed to prove that all these "possible", transient causes must end at an essential, self-existent cause.

This method has been used by them for thousands of years, from the earliest age of philosophy to this day. There was never any doubt in their minds that the effects – including the natural transient causes – need an essential Cause. In other words, when they attribute the effects to an essential cause, it is not done because they do not know some thing's natural cause.

Third: The Qur'ãn proves the oneness of the Creator. It does so by showing that all components of the universe are governed by the general law of causality; it accepts the attribution of each happening to its particular cause, and confirms what normal wisdom says about it. It ascribes natural phenomena to their natural causes, and attributes to man the actions done by his own free will. There is no need to quote here numerous verses based on this theme. And then it ascribes all these things and happenings – without any exception – to Allãh. For example, *Allãh is the Creator of every thing* (39:62) ; *That is Allãh, your Lord, the Creator of every thing; there is no god but He* (40:62); *His is the creation and command* (7:54); *His is what is in the heaven and what is in the earth and what is between them two and what is beneath the ground* (20:6). Whatever may be called a "thing", it is created by Allãh, and may be attributed to Him in a way befitting His Majesty. There are other verses which attribute an action to its doer and at the same time ascribe it to Allãh. For example, *And Allãh has created you and what you make* (37:96). The verse attributes the actions of men to them and then attributes their creation and that of their actions to Allãh. Also, it says: *and you did not smite when you smote* (the enemy), *but it was Allãh Who smote* (8:17). This verse admits that the act of throwing arrow was done by the Messenger of Allãh, and then negates it, ascribing it to Allãh Himself. There are other verses of the same connotation.

There are some other verses which combine the two attributions in a general way. For example, . . . *and Who created every thing, then ordained for it a measure* (25:2)*; Surely We have created every thing according to a measure . . . And every thing small and great is written down* (54:49 – 53) ; *Allãh indeed has made a measure for every thing* (65:3) ; *And there is not a*

thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure (15:21). Making or appointing a measure for every thing means that Allãh has confined it within the limits of the material causes and the boundaries of time and space.

In short, it can never be doubted that the Qur'ãn proves the existence of the One and Only God basing its arguments on the system of causality found in all the components of the universe; and then it attributes the whole universe to Allãh, Who created and made all of it. It is not that we ascribe some things to Allãh and some others to their material causes – as the materialists allege.

Why could not the materialists understand this clear fact? They were misled by the Church in the medieval ages, whose pseudo-philosophers tackled this and similar problems in the manner quoted by the materialists; writers of other religions too rely on similar arguments. The fact is that their discourses were distorted, and their arguments lacked precision. They wanted to explain their true claim (which, their reason told them in general terms, was correct). They tried to go into details of that general idea. But their weak understanding and unripe reasoning led them away from the right method; consequently, they generalized their claim and misdirected their argument. It were they who attributed every thing or effect of unknown cause directly to Allãh, and said that voluntary actions did not need any outside cause, and that consequently man's voluntary actions did not belong to Allãh; man was independent of Allãh in such actions. We have written on this topic in detail under the verse: *but He does not cause to err by it* (any) *except the transgressors* (2:26); here something more has been added to complete the discourse.

Another group is that of some Muslim traditionalists and theologians (and some others) whose vision does not penetrate to the inner core of a subject. They did not understand how could the voluntary actions of man be attributed to Allãh in a manner that would conform with His Sublime Majesty. Consequently, they thought that man-made things could not be said to have been made by Allãh, and especially those things which were made

exclusively for sins, for example, liquor, and instruments of music and gambling etc. Allãh says: . . . *intoxicants and games of chance and* (sacrificing to) *stones set up and* (dividing by) *arrows are only an abomination of Satan's handiwork* . . . (5:90). And evidently what Allãh counts as handiwork of Satan should not be ascribed to Allãh Himself.

COMMENT : The discourse written earlier is enough to show the invalidity of this erroneous surmise – both from the Qur'ãn and traditions and the rational point of view. The fact is that man's voluntary actions may be attributed to Allãh in a befitting manner, and likewise man-made things, being the result of those actions, may be attributed to Allãh.

Moreover, "the stones", mentioned in the verse 5:90 above, refers to the idols and images which are set for worship, and the verse 37:96 (*And Allãh has created you and what you make*) says that those idols too are creation of Allãh. Obviously, an idol may be looked at from different perspectives. From one point of view it may be ascribed to Allãh, for example, looking at the nature of its existence, disregarding the fact of its being used for sin of polytheism. What is an idol? It is just a stone or metal with a particular shape; and as such there is no reason why it should not be attributed to the Creator of all things. Of course, from another angle it is a thing that is worshipped besides Allãh; and from this perspective it cannot be attributed to Allãh; it should rather be ascribed to the Satan or man. The same principle may be applied for other man-made things.

It clearly shows that man-made things may be attributed to Allãh just like any other natural phenomenon, without any difference. Of course, it all depends on the degree of existence the said things enjoy. (Think on it.)

QUR'ÃN: *and the water that Allãh sends down from the cloud, then gives you life with it to the earth after its death and spreads in it all* (kinds of) *animals:* What is rain? There are various elements mixed in the water of rivers and other water sources. Then it turns into steam, going up and carrying heat. The steam

continues to ascend until it reaches extremely cold strata of the atmosphere. Then the steam changes into water coming down as rain. Some times the steam is frozen into snow or hail. In what-ever form, it comes down to us, which drinks it in and becomes alive again. Also, the earth stores a major part of the rain, etc., above or below its surface, and that water comes out and flows as streams and rivers, etc., on the face of earth. Water is the source of life for every living thing. The rain coming down from the clouds is a phenomenon of life, which takes place according to a well regulated and intricately laid down system – without any break down or exception. The genesis of vegetables and animals – of all types – depends on water.

The rain – being inter-woven with so many phenomena of the universe, horizontally and vertically – becomes an inseparable part of the universe. It needs a Creator to create it, a cause to bring it into existence. In other words, there is a God for it. And man's genesis and life depend on the rain and water. Therefore, the same God who has created water and the intricate system of rain, is the God who has created man. The God of rain is the God of man.

QUR'ÃN: *and the changing of the wind:* It refers to the changes in directions of the wind, because of various natural factors, the most important of them being the sun's rays. The sun raises the temperature of the air, making it lighter and less dense. This lighter air is unable to carry the load of the surrounding air which is cooler and heavier. Therefore, the heavier air glides down, forcibly displacing the lighter one. The lighter air travels in a direction opposite to that of the heavier one. And the resulting current is called wind. The wind helps in pollination of trees, shrubs and flowers, removes atmospheric pollutions, carries rain clouds from one place to another, besides rendering many other services. Blowing of wind is a most important factor in the genesis and life of vegetable, animal and man.

Wind, by itself, proves that there is a Creator God; by its inter-woven relation with other terrestrial and extra terrestrial phenomena, proves that there is only one Creator for the whole

universe; and by being a very important factor for the genesis and life of man, proves that the God of man and the God of the universe is one and the same.

QUR'ÃN: *and the clouds made subservient between the heaven and the earth: as-Saḥãb* (اَلسَّحَابُ) is condensed watery vapour floating in air at some distance; it is the source of rain. As long as the steam remains on or near the earth, it is called *aḍ-ḍabãb* (اَلضَّبَابُ = fog; mist) ; when it leaves the earth and floats in the air at a distance, it is called *as-saḥãb, al-ghaym* (اَلغَيْمُ) and *alghamãm* (اَلغَمَامُ), etc., all having the same meaning: cloud. *at-Taskhīr* (اَلتَّسْخِيْرُ = to subjugate a thing, to make it subservient in its activities). The cloud is made subservient, in its flow and rain, to the winds and atmospheric temperature and other relevant factors, by the permission of Allãh.

The cloud is a sign of Allãh in the same way as other things mentioned with it.

The alternation of the day and the night, the rain coming down from the clouds, the blowing of wind and the subservient clouds are the main natural phenomena, which together make up the system of creation in the terrestrial world, like the vegetable, the animal and the man. This verse may therefore be taken to be a detail of the general statement contained in the verse: . . . *and He blessed therein and made therein its foods, in four periods: alike for the seekers* (41:10).

QUR'ÃN: *there are signs for a people who understand. al-'Aql* ((اَلعَقْلُ) is *maṣdar* of *'aqala, ya'qilu* (عَقَلَ، يَعْقِلُ = he understood, he understands). It denotes perfect comprehension and understanding. *al-'Aql is* that by which man differentiates between good and bad, distinguishes fact from fiction, and discerns truth and falsehood. It is the self same man who perceives; it is not one of his faculties and characteristics which are like branches of the soul, for example, the memory, and the eye-sight, etc.

QUR'ÃN: *And there are some among men who take for themselves equals* (*i.e.,* objects of worship) *besides Allãh:an-Nidd* (اَلنِّدُّ)

is on the paradigm of *al-mithl* (اَلمِثْلُ) and has the same meaning: equal, alike, etc. In some other verses Allãh has used a slightly different phrase; for example, *therefore do not set up equals to Allãh* (2:22) *; and they set up equals with Allãh* (14:30). The style has been changed here to "besides Allãh" because it is preceded by the exclusive statement: "And your God is one God! there is no god but He; . . ." Thus anyone taking any object of worship besides Allãh would violate that exclusiveness without any justification; he would take as god something which, he is well aware, is not god; he would do so just in pursuit of his base desire, and in complete disregard to the decree of his reason. That is why Allãh has used the word "equals" as common noun, to show their degradation: "And there are some among men who take for themselves equals besides Allãh."

QUR'ÃN: *Whom they love as the love for Allãh, and those who believe are stronger in* (their) *love for Allãh:* The word used is *yuḥibbũnahum* (يُحِبُّونَهُمْ = they love them); the objective pronoun used here is reserved for rational beings. It means that the word "equals" does not refer to idols only, it includes also the angels and those men who were worshipped besides Allãh. Rather, it covers all those who were obeyed by people without any authority from Allãh. This interpretation gets support from the verse following it: *When those who were followed shall renounce those who followed* (them) (2:166). Also, Allãh says: . . . *and* (that) *some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allãh* (3:64)*; They have taken their doctors of law and their monks for lords besides Allãh* (9:31).

The verse shows that love may be attributed to Allãh in reality, contrary to the claims of those who say that love, being a branch of the faculty of desire, is related in reality to the body and the matters concerning the body only; and cannot be attributed as such to Allãh. According to them, love of God means obedience to Him, doing what He commands us to do and refraining from what He forbids; thus love may be attributed to Allãh only in a metaphorical sense, as Allãh says: *Say: "If you love Allãh, then follow me, Allãh will love you and forgive you your sins"* (3:31).

But the verse under discussion goes against their claim. The phrase “stronger in (their) love for Allãh”, shows that love of Allãh may vary in intensity; it is stronger in the believers than in those who take others as equals to Allãh. On the other hand, if love is taken to mean obedience, the meaning would be: “and those who believe are more obedient to Allãh”. Obviously, there could be no question here of any comparative degree of obedience, because the obedience of others is no obedience at all in the eyes of Allãh. Therefore, “love” here has been used in its real, not metaphorical, sense.

It is supported also by the verse which says: *Say: “If your fathers and your sons and your brethren and your mates and your kinsfolk and property which you have acquired, and the trade slackness of which you fear and dwellings which you like, are dearer to you than Allãh and His Messenger and striving in His way . . . ”* (9:24). The word translated here as ‘dearer’ is *aḥabb*(أَحَبُّ = more loved). Evidently the love ascribed to Allãh, and that ascribed to His Messenger, and the love attributed to the fathers, the sons, and the property, etc., is all of the same quiddity, all of it has the same reality. Otherwise, the phrase ‘dearer to you’ could not be used. The comparative degree signifies that both sides – the preferred one and the preferred against – share in the basic quality, although they differ in its degree, one being stronger, the other weaker.

The verse condemns those who take others as equals to Allãh, saying: “whom they love as the love for Allãh” ; then it praises the believers, saying that they, “are stronger in (their) love for Allãh.” This comparison between the two groups apparently shows that the former has been condemned because they have divided their love between Allãh and those whom they have taken as equals to Allãh. There was possibility of a misunderstanding that if they had loved Allãh more, they would not have been blamed. But the next sentences leave no room for such erroneous surmises. “O that those who are unjust could see when they see the chastisement that the power is wholly Allãh’s . . . When those who were followed shall renounce those who followed (them), and they see the chastisement and their ties are

cut asunder . . . Thus will Allãh show them their deeds to be intense regret to them . . ." These verses make it clear that they have been condemned not because of the love, *per se,* but because of its concomitant, that is, following. They followed false deities thinking that those deities had power which would help the followers to fulfil their desires or to ward off some undesirable situation. Thus, they discarded the truth either wholly or in some aspects – and the one who follows Allãh in some aspects only, is not a follower at all. Thus, there is no room for the above-mentioned misunderstanding. It is now clear that man should not take any partner for Allãh in this love, otherwise, it will be polytheism. However, when the love for Allãh becomes stronger, the lover does not follow anyone other than Allãh; he exclusively obeys the commands of Allãh. That is why the believers have been praised that they "are stronger in (their) love for Allãh".

Now we know that the love has been praised and condemned because of its concomitant, that is, following and obedience. If a man loves someone other than Allãh in obedience to the commands of Allãh, when that someone calls to the obedience of Allãh only, then such a love cannot be censured at all. As Allãh says: *Say: "If your fathers and your sons . . . are dearer to you than Allãh and His Messenger . . ."* (9:24). This verse assigns to the Messenger (s.a.w.a.) a love as it assigns it to Allãh Himself; it is so because love of the Messenger of Allãh (s.a.w.a.) is one with the love of Allãh. Why? Because the effect of this love, that is, following of the Messenger (s.a.w.a.) is exactly the obedience of Allãh. Allãh Himself calls to the obedience of His Messenger, as He says: *And We did not send any messenger but that he should be obeyed by Allãh's permission* (4:64) *; Say: "If you love Allãh, then follow me, Allãh will love you"* (3:31). In the same category comes the love of any one whose obedience leads to the obedience of Allãh, for example, a religious scholar who guides people by his knowledge, a sign that points to Allãh, the Qur'ãn which brings the reciter nearer to Allãh, and things like that. All these are loved because of the love of Allãh, and by following them one obeys Allãh and comes nearer to Him.

In short, whoever loves any one besides Allãh, thinking that he

has a power, and follows him in order to fulfil some of his needs, or obeys him in a matter which Allãh has not allowed, then he has indeed taken other objects of worship besides Allãh, and surely Allãh will show them their deeds to be intense regret to them. On the other hand, the believers are those who love nothing except Allãh, do not seek power except from Allãh, and do not follow except that which is from the commands and prohibitions of Allãh. They are those who are sincere to Allãh in religion.

Also, it is clear that the love of those whose love is Allãh's love, and whose obedience Allãh's obedience (like the Prophet and his progeny; the divine scholars, the Book of Allãh and the traditions of His Prophet; in short, every thing that leads one to Allãh's remembrance in a sincere way) is diametrically opposed to polytheism. Indeed, one proceeds nearer to Allãh by loving and following the above-mentioned personalities and things. To honour and respect them is a part of piety, and love and fear of Allãh. As Allãh says: *and whoever respects the signs of Allãh, this surely is* (the outcome) *of the piety of hearts* (22:32). *ash-Sha'ã'ir* (الشَّعَآئِرُ) means the signs that lead or point to some-thing; the phrase, 'the signs of Allãh' is general, not restricted to any particular thing like the Ṣafã and the Marwah, etc. It means that one must respect every sign of Allãh, every divinely approved symbol which reminds one of Allãh; because it is an outcome of piety, a reflection of the love and fear of Allãh. And this principle applies to all the signs which lead one to piety.

Of course, it is clear as day that one should not think that those signs and symbols are in any way independent of Allãh, or that they control for themselves or for others any harm or profit, or that they have any independent authority over their own or others' life, death or resurrection. Evidently, if one had such a belief, then these things would not remain signs of Allãh, they would become equals of Allãh – and it would be *ash-shirk* (الشِّرْكُ = ascribing partners to Allãh) ; may He protect you from such polytheism.

QUR'ÃN: *O that those who are unjust could see, when they see the chastisement, that the power is wholly Allãh's and that*

Allãh is severe in chastisement: Apparently, "when they see the chastisement" is the object of the verb, "could see"; and "that the power is wholly Allãh's and that Allãh is severe in chastisement" are the explanatory phrases describing "the chastisement" (in the phrase "when they see the chastisement"). *Wa-law* (وَلَوْ = would that; O that; if only; I wish) is an optative particle, used to express wish. The verse therefore means: Would that those who are unjust could see in this world the day when they would see the chastisement; then they would see that the power belongs wholly to Allãh, and that they had committed the greatest blunder when they ascribed some of that power to their false deities, and that Allãh is severe in chastisement and in punishing those who are guilty of this unforgiveable sin. As the next verses show, the chastisement would contain of their seeing their blunder in taking other objects of worship besides Allãh, and in their wrong assumption that those objects had any power, and then seeing the punishment of their polytheism and misdeed. The next two verses support this interpretation: "When those who were followed shall renounce those who followed (them)." The followers will not get any hoped-for benefit from their leaders; "and they see the chastisement and their ties are cut asunder". Nothing shall have any power or effect besides Allãh. "And those who followed shall say: 'O were there for us a return:' " they shall ardently wish to return to this world. "then we would renounce" these objects of worship whom we took as equals to Allãh, and whom we followed, in this world, "as they have renounced us" in the next world. "Thus will Allãh show" those who were unjust and took others as equals to Allãh, "their deeds" (i.e., their love and obedience to those leaders whom they took as equals to Allãh) "to be intense regret to them, and they shall not come forth from the fire".

QUR'ÃN: *and they shall not come forth from the fire:* It is a proof against those who say that the chastisement of the fire shall one day come to an end.

TRADITIONS

Shurayḥ ibn Hãni said: "A Bedouin went on the day of the Camel to the Leader of the faithful ('Ali, a.s.) and said: 'O Leader of the faithful! Do you say that Allãh is one?' " (Shurayḥ) said: "Then the people bore down on him and said: 'O Arab! Don't you see how preoccupied the Leader of the faithful is?' But the Leader of the faithful said: 'Let him be. Because what (this) Bedouin wants (i.e., gnosis of Allãh) is the very thing which we want from these people (i.e., the enemies): Then he (Ali, a.s.) said: 'O Arab! The sentence, "Allãh is one", may be interpreted in four ways, two of them are not permissible for Allãh and two are allowed. The two meanings which are not permissible for Allãh are: (1) The saying of a sayer "one", when he uses it as a number: It is not permissible, because that which has no second (i.e., is unique) does not come within the domain of number. Do you not see that (Allãh) has declared him an unbeliever who said that God was the third of the three? (2) And the saying of a sayer that "He is one of the people", in the same sense as a species is one of (its) genes. This (also) is not allowed because it likens Allãh (to other things), and our Lord is too great for, and far above of, this (likening). And as for the two meanings which are applicable to Him, they are: (1) The saying of a sayer, "He is one, there is nothing like unto Him"; such (indeed) is our Lord. (2) And the saying of a sayer that, He, the Mighty, the Great, is unique in significance, that is, He is not divisible – neither in existence, nor in thought or imagination; such (indeed) is our Lord.' " (*al-Khiṣãl; at-Tawḥīd; Ma'ãni 'l-akhbãr*)

The author says: The two meanings confirmed by him ('Ali, a.s.) conform with what we have written in the explanation of the verse: *And your God is one God. . .*

The lectures narrated from 'Ali (a.s.), ar-Riḍã (a.s.) and other Imãms of the *Ahlu 'l-bayt* (*a.s.*) repeatedly say that 'He is one not by number'. It refers to His pristine person which does not accept counting.

There is in a prayer of *aṣ-Ṣaḥīfah as-Sajjãdiyyah,* the sentence, "Thine is the oneness of number". It is interpreted as to refer to "ownership", that is, 'Thou art the owner of the oneness of number'; it does not meant that 'Thou art one in number', because reason as well as the Qur'ãn and the traditions firmly prove that His existence is Unique and pure, it is not duplicable nor can it be repeated – according to His person and reality.

al-Bãqir (a.s.) said in a tradition, *inter alia,* about the words of Allãh, *And there are some among men who take for them-selves equals besides Allãh . . .:* " O Jãbir! They are, by Allãh!, the leaders of the unjust ones and their followers" (*al-Kãfī; al-Ikhtiṣãṣ;* al-'Ayyãshī). In the last-named book the wording is: " O Jãbir! By Allãh! They are the leaders of the injustice and their followers."

The author says: Its meaning is clear in the light of the explanation given above. Why did the Imãm refer to them as "the leaders of injustice"? It is because Allãh has said: *O that those who are unjust could see. . .* Thus, the followers who took for themselves equals besides Allãh were "unjust"; therefore, their leaders must be "the leaders of the unjust ones" and "the leaders of injustice".

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said about the words of Allãh, *Thus will Allãh show them their deeds to be intense regret to them:* "He is a man who leaves (untouched) his wealth and because of avarice does not spend it in the obedience of Allãh; then he dies and leaves it to someone who uses it in the obedience of Allãh, or in His dis-obedience. If he (the heir) used it in the obedience of Allãh, (the legator) shall see it in the "balance" of another man, and he shall look at it in intense regret, as the wealth had (originally) belonged to him. And if he (the heir) used it in disobedience of Allãh, then it was he (the legator) who strengthened him with that wealth so that he used it in the disobedience of Allãh." (*al-Kãfī*)

The author says: This meaning has been narrated by al-'Ayyãshī, aṣ-Ṣadũq, al-Mufid and at-Tabrasi, from al-Bãqir and

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.). It has used the word, equals, in a wider sense; and as we have explained earlier, this expanded meaning is with-out any doubt, quite in place.

A PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE ON LOVE

Love is one of our emotional feelings; we apply it for the love of food, love of women, love of wealth, love of honour and love of knowledge. We have no doubt that we have these five loves. Also, there is no doubt that when we use the word, love, in the above contexts, we intend the same meaning everywhere; and not only the word, but the meaning also is the same in all the five phrases. At the same time, we know that these contexts are different. The question is: Is this a difference of categories, or of some other type?

Let us look at the love of food. We love an edible thing, like a fruit, because it is related to the activity of our faculty of nutrition. If there were no such faculty, if there were not that nourishment which perfects our body, we would not have loved that fruit, and there would have been no such love. Therefore, the love exists, in reality, between the faculty of nutrition and its activity, on one side, and the satisfaction which that faculty gets from that activity, on the other side. When we say, “satisfaction”, we do not mean the satisfying taste which one feels when eating – because the sense of taste is a functionary of the faculty of nutrition, and not the faculty itself. We actually mean that particular pleasure which the faculty gets from its activity.

Likewise, if we look at the love of women, we find that that love is related in reality and primarily to cohabitation, and only secondarily to the women, as its concomitant – in the same way as the love of food was related to a particular food just secondarily and only as a concomitant. Cohabitation is the effect of a faculty given to animals, in the same way as eating food is the effect of a faculty given to them. Evidently, these two loves belong to the same root, that is, a subsistent relationship between these two faculties and their activities – in other words their active perfection.

At this stage, it might possibly be thought that love was an attachment exclusively reserved for the above two faculties, that it was not found in other contexts. But experiment (through various effects) removes this misunderstanding. This attachment, known as love, has an effect on the lover. The lover moves towards the object of his/its love, and yearns for the loved action if he/it is separated from it, and does not like to leave it, after he/it has found it. This particular effect of love is found in all our powers of conception and their actions. All our powers and faculties like eye-sight, hearing, memory and imagination – in short all our internal and external senses – have this very effect, this very attribute, no matter whether they are acting or reacting. Each of these faculties loves its activity and is attracted to it. And it is only because its activity is its perfection, makes up its deficiency, and fulfils its natural need. In this way, we know the significance of the love of wealth, love of power and love of knowledge. Man seeks his perfection through his wealth, honour and knowledge.

It may be inferred from it that love is a special emotional attachment, a particular conscious attraction between man and his perfection. Detailed researches have shown that it is found in animals too. And it is because the lover acts upon, and reacts to, his loved activity; then that love extends to the things related to that activity, as the love of eating was extended to that of fruit. This principle would apply also to other things besides animals, provided they could consciously seek or bestow perfection.

From another point of view, as love is a subsistent relationship between the lover and the loved, there exists a positive connection between them. Now, if an effect (which has the relation of love with its cause) is a conscious being and has got sense and feeling, it would find that love within its soul – if it has a soul and independent existence.

The above discourse leads us to the following conclusions:–

First: Love is a subsistent relationship, a special attraction between perfecting cause (or things like that) and perfection-seeking effect (or things like that). That is why we love our actions, because through them we seek perfection. And as its extension, we love the things related to our activities; for example, food

which we take, mate with whom we cohabit, wealth which we use, honour from which we gain benefit, a benefactor who bestows something on us, a teacher who teaches us, a leader who guides us, a helper who helps us, a student who learns from us, a servant who serves us, a follower who obeys and follows us. All these are various manifestations of love, some of them are physical, some imaginary and some others intellectual.

Second: Love has different degrees of strength and weakness, because it is a subsistent attraction, an existing attachment – and there are such degrees even in existence itself. Obviously, the attachment between a sufficient cause and its effect cannot be like the one existing between an insufficient cause and its effect. Also, the perfection (because of which the attachment of love comes into being) is itself of various categories, some of it essential, some others inessential, some of it material (like nourishment), others immaterial (like knowledge). It shows the invalidity of the theory which says that love is exclusively reserved for material things. (Some of them said that love was basically related to food only, and other loves issued forth from it; some others gave that central place to the love of sexual intercourse; according to them all other loves branched out from it.)

Third: Allãh deserves to be loved – from whatever angle you look at it. Allãh is Self-subsistent, exists by Himself; His perfection is limitless while all other perfections are but limited. A limited thing attaches itself to the limitless one in existence. This attachment, this love, is a part of existence, a part of personality; it can never diminish or go away. Moreover, Allãh has created us, and bestows on us countless and limitless favours; that is why we love Him, as every bestower of bounties is loved for his favours.

Fourth: As mentioned in the beginning, love is subsistent and existing relationship. Such relations are not separate from the very existence of their subjects. It follows that every thing loves its own person. Also, it was mentioned that by its extension, we love the things related to the loved – therefore, every thing loves the effects of its own existence. It is clear from the above that Allãh loves His creation because of His love of His Own Self;

and He loves His creation because they are recipients of His favours; and He loves His creation because they accept His guidance.

Fifth: We said earlier that sense, consciousness and knowledge are concomitants of love. But it is necessary in practice only, Otherwise, the subsistent attachment – which is the reality of love – does not depend, *per se,* on these factors. It appears from this that even the natural powers and faculties – which have no sense or feeling – love their own actions and effects.

Sixth: It follows that love is a reality which permeates all the existing things.

ANOTHER PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE ON PERPETUITY OF PUNISHMENT

The question arises: Will the chastisement of the Hell come to its end at some time, or will it continue endlessly? Both theories have their adherents and both groups support their views with intellectual reasoning and apparent meanings of the Qur'ãn and traditions.

As for the Qur'ãn, it unambiguously declares that many groups shall abide for ever – endlessly and perpetually – in the Hell. As Allãh says: *and they shall not come forth from the fire* (2:167).

And nearly *mutawãtir* traditions narrated from the Imãms of the *Ahlu 'l-bayt* (*a.s.*) clearly say the same thing. Of course, there are some traditions emanating from other sources which support the view that the chastisement will end. But these traditions must be rejected outright because they are against the clear declarations of the Qur'ãn.

Now, we come to intellectual reasons. As we said under the verse: *And be on your guard against the day when one soul shall not avail another . . .* (2:48), it is not possible to explain the details concerning the Resurrection and the Judgment with the help of intellectual deductions, because our reason lacks the premises necessary to lead to a conclusion. The only way is to believe in what the Truthful Prophet (s.a.w.a.) has brought to us

through Divine Revelation – because his truth has been proved without any doubt.

As for the spiritual bliss and chastisement, they happen to the immaterial soul as it acquires good or bad characteristics and traits and is thus wrapped in beautiful or ugly conditions. We have mentioned there* that these conditions and characteristics appear to the psyche in their respective good or ugly shapes, and the psyche enjoys the beautiful and good shapes, if it is itself good; and is tormented by what is bad and ugly, whether it is itself good or bad.

If these resulting shapes are not deeply imprinted on the psyche, and are not agreeable to its person, they are bound to disappear sooner or later, because their appearance is a matter of constraint; and we know that constraint does not continue for ever. Suppose there is a true believer who has committed some sins. This man is good and happy in his person, but his psyche has been polluted by, and wrapped in, ugly unhappy shapes. Obviously this ugly shape, not being deeply imprinted will certainly get removed.

But if these ugly shapes have been deeply imprinted on the psyche, then it reshapes the psyche in its own mould. The soul acquires a new shape and becomes almost a new species. Suppose there is a "niggard man"; now niggardliness gives a new form to his humanity, in the same way as "rationality" gives a new form to "animality ", and "rational animal" (i.e., man) becomes a new species under the genes, "animal". Likewise "niggard man" becomes a new species under the genes "man". This species has an eternal existence of its own. The man, before the characteristics of niggardliness were firmly ingrained in his psyche, did practise niggardliness under constraint and felt unhappy. But now he does it, by permission of Allãh, naturally without any constraint. And as it is done by this new species without constraint, it is eternal, endless and perpetual – contrary to the former condition when it was done under constraint and could therefore be got rid of. This man gets punished because of the concomitants of his

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* See *al-Mīzãn* (Eng. transl.) , vol.1, pp.261-2. (*tr.*)

characteristics and traits. We may compare his case with that of a man suffering from chronic melancholia or hallucination. His mind perceives frightening nightmares and he is always tortured by it – although it is he himself who produces these fantasies without any extraneous constraint or compulsion. The pictures appearing in his mind are not agreeable to his sick psyche, and he is tortured by it, although it is he himself who has created them. Yet, as we know, he suffers because of it. What is punishment? It is that from which man runs away (if not inflicted by it yet) and longs to extricate himself (if already suffering from it). And this definition applies to the ugly shapes and frightening conditions which an "unhappy" man suffers in his next abode. It proves that the chastisement of the next world is perpetual and never-ending – for a man whose unhappiness has become an integral part of his personality.

Many objections have been raised against perpetuity of chastisement, all of them clearly without a leg to stand upon:

First Objection: Allãh's mercy is limitless, all-encompassing. How can He, in His mercy, create someone whose destination would be a perpetual chastisement which no one could bear?

Second Objection: Punishment is punishment when it is not agreeable to the nature of the convicted person. In other words when it is a compulsion, a constraint. And perpetual constraint is unthinkable. Therefore, it is wrong to say that there would be perpetual punishment.

Third Objection: The man had committed sins which were not perpetual; they came to their end after a short or long duration. How can he be requited with a perpetual never-ending punishment?

Fourth Objection: Even the evil-doers serve the system of creation no less than the good-doers. If they were not there, the virtue of good people could not come about. This being the case, why should they be thrown into perpetual punishment?

Fifth Objection: It is a revenge to punish someone who disobeys the commandments of Allãh. As a rule revenge is taken because the unjust and disobedient person makes the wronged party

suffer some loss; and that party, if powerful enough, avenges itself to make up that loss. But this rule cannot apply to Allãh, because He is Self-sufficient and nobody can inflict any harm or loss upon Him. In this background, how can He punish anyone – and especially with a perpetual punishment?

There are other similar objections against the perpetuity of punishment. If you ponder on what we have written earlier explaining the meaning of the perpetuity of punishment, you will realize that these objections are completely wide of mark :

General Reply: Perpetual punishment is the effect of the form of infelicity and unhappiness when it becomes an inseparable characteristic of the "unhappy" man. It happens after the man acquires full capability for it – through relevant conditions of the psyche – and exercises his free choice by choosing evil, instead of good. That capability creates in the psyche the shape commensurate with it. We do not ask why a man does human actions, once the matter has acquired the human form – because the human form itself is sufficient cause of human activities. Likewise, we cannot ask why the effects of the inseparable unhappiness and infelicity (including perpetual punishment) are appearing, after the psyche has acquired the form of inseparable unhappiness and infelicity. Because it is its inseparable characteristic and effect. This general reply sufficiently refutes all the objections. Now let us look at each objection separately:-

Reply to the First Objection: When we say "mercy of Allãh" we do not refer to any softness of heart, mildness of temper or other such psychological effects, because such mercy presupposes material existence, and Allãh is far above such insinuations. Divine Mercy means bestowing on the recipient all things which he is fully qualified for. A fully qualified person longs for the things he is qualified for; and his qualification itself becomes a constant demand for it as if it had a tongue of its own. And Allãh gives him what he thus demands and asks for. His Mercy is of two kinds: general and particular. The general mercy gives whatever a person is qualified for in the framework of existence. The particular mercy bestows whatever a person is qualified for in the highway that leads towards monotheism and bliss of Allãh's Nearness. When

Allãh gives the form of inseparable "unhappiness" to a person who is fully qualified for it, it is not against the general mercy; it is rather a part of that mercy. And perpetual punishment is a compulsory result of that form. As for the particular mercy, it does not cover the person who is not proceeding on the highway of guidance. Now let us look at the claim that perpetual punishment is against the Divine Mercy. If by "mercy" they refer to the general mercy, then surely it is not against it – it is rather a part of the general mercy. And if they mean the particular mercy, then the claim is untenable, because this case is out of the jurisdiction of the particular mercy.

Moreover, this objection, if sustainable, could also be laid against intermittent punishment. Nay, it would invalidate punishments of this world too.

Reply to the Second Objection: First we should decide why a thing is disagreeable to the nature. A thing or condition may be disagreeable to a man because there is no common factor between the man and that thing or condition. This indeed is a constraint, and it happens because of compulsion by an extraneous agent; and goes away as soon as that constraint is removed.

There is, on the other hand, an action or condition which emanates from the very nature of the man, when that nature is thoroughly polluted, when it is moulded in ugly mould and acquires a shape other than the original one. Man, in that existence, demands terrifying punishment; his transformed psyche, by its very nature, longs for chastisement – although at the same time he does not like it. We have earlier given the example of the man suffering from melancholia: Doubtlessly, the terrifying pictures emanating from his mind are "agreeable" to his psyche, because they are the products of that distorted psyche itself, and such effects are surely agreeable to the related psyche or nature. But at the same time they are indeed torture and punishment, because the definition of "punishment" applies thereto. In short, the eternal punishment is disagreeable from the viewpoint of sensitivity, and at the same time it is agreeable because it emanates from the psyche itself.

Reply to the Third Objection: The punishment is not the result of the sin and disobedience which were limited and came to

an end. It is the effect of the perpetual ugly shape to which the man's psyche was moulded as a result of those limited and counted sins. There is no question here of a limited cause bringing about an unlimited effect – which, of course, is impossible. As an example, look at the man himself; there were a lot of limited causes which ultimately moulded the matter into human form; now he acts and reacts as a human being, because of that human form. And that humanity continues for ever, even after his death. We cannot ask about this man, as to how did a set of limited causes bring into being those unlimited and unending effects – because their efficient cause exists with them for ever. Likewise, it cannot be asked how can a set of limited sins bring about perpetual limitless chastisement.

Reply to the Fourth Objection: Service and worship, like mercy, is of two kinds: general and particular. General service is to submit to the Source of existence, that is, God, in the affairs and conditions of existence. Particular service is to submit to God and obey Him, in the path that leads to monotheism. Each type of service and obedience has a reward of its own, a mercy most suitable to it. Obviously, the general service in the system of creation is rewarded by general mercy – and as explained earlier, eternal bliss and eternal chastisement both are parts of that mercy. And the particular service is rewarded by the particular mercy, that is, bounties of the Paradise.

Moreover, if this objection is recognized as valid, then it would also negate the limited chastisement of the Hell and even punishments of this world too.

Reply to the Fifth Objection: As you have seen, the perpetual chastisement is ascribed to the shape of unhappiness acquired by man; and to Allãh in the sense in which every existing thing is attributed to Him. That punishment is not attributed to Him in the meaning of revenge and satisfaction of the feeling of rage and anger, because such thing is impossible for Allãh.

Of course, one of the names used for Allãh is "the Avenger". But it is used in the sense that Allãh requites severely His servant when he (the servant) transgresses the limits of servitude and crosses the boundary of obedience going into that of revolt and

disobedience. “Revenge” in this meaning is not impossible for Allãh; and the perpetual punishment may be called “revenge” in this sense, without any difficulty.

Moreover, this objection, if tenable, may be laid against terminable punishment also; and even against the worldly punishments.

A QUR’ÃNIC NOTE ON THE ABOVE SUBJECT

It should be noted here that this method of argument, which we have used against the above-mentioned objections, has been used also in the Qur’ãn and traditions. Allãh says: *Whoever desires this present life, We hasten to him therein what We please for whomsoever We desire, then We assign to him the hell; he shall enter it despised, driven away. And whoever desires the hereafter and strives for it as he ought to strive and he is a believer;* (as for) *these, their striving shall be thanked. All do we aid – these as well as those – out of the bounty of your Lord, and the bounty of your Lord is not confined* (17:18-20). As you see, the verses count both chastisement and good recompense as parts of the bounty and mercy of Allãh; and it is made clear that whatever happens, it is related to the will, desire and striving of the servant himself. It is this very method that we have used in explaining the main topic and replying to the objections. There are many other verses of this connotation; and we shall write on them in their proper places, Allãh willing.

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يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالاً طَيِّباً وَلاَ تَتَّبِعُوا
خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ـ ١٦٨ . إِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالسُّوءِ
وَالْفَحْشَاءِ وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللهِ مَا لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ ـ ١٦٩ . وَإِذَا قِيلَ
لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا
أَوَلَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لاَ يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئاً وَلاَ يَهْتَدُونَ ـ ١٧٠ . مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي يَنْعِقُ بِمَا لاَ يَسْمَعُ إِلَّا دُعَاءً وَنِدَاءً صُمٌّ بُكْمٌ
عُمْيٌ فَهُمْ لاَ يَعْقِلُونَ ـ ١٧١ .

O men! eat the lawful (and) *good things out of what is in the earth, and do not follow the footsteps of the Satan, surely he is your open enemy* (168). *He only enjoins you evil and indecency, and that you may speak against Allãh what you do not know* (169). *And when it is said to them: "Follow what Allãh has revealed," they say: "Nay! we follow what we found our fathers upon." What! and though their fathers had no sense at all, nor did they follow the right way* (170). *And the parable of those who disbelieve is as the parable of one who calls out to that which hears no more than a call and cry; deaf, dumb* (and) *blind, so they do not understand* (171).

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COMMENTARY

QUR'ÃN: *O men! eat the lawful* (and) *good things out of what is in the earth . . . what you do not know: al-Ḥalãl* (اَلحَلاَلُ = lawful) is opposite of *al-ḥarãm* (اَلحَرَامُ = forbidden) ; *al-hill* (اَلحِلُّ) is used as opposite of *al-ḥurmah* (اَلحُرْمَةُ = prohibition), *al-ḥaram* (اَلحَرَمُ = sanctuary) ; while *al-ḥall* (اَلحَلُّ = to untie) is opposite of *al-'aqd* (العَقْدُ = to tie). All these usages of *al-ḥill* allude to freedom of a thing in its action and effect. *aṭ-Ṭayyib* (الطَّيِّبُ = good) is opposite of *al-khabīth* (الخَبِيْثُ = bad, evil), and basically means "agreeable"; a good speech is that which is agreeable to the hearing; a good perfume is agreeable to the sense of smelling; a good place or house is agreeable to the people residing therein. *al-Khuṭuwãt* (الخُطُوَاتُ) is plural of *al-khuṭwah* (الخُطْوَةُ = step, pace, stride). Some reciters have read it as *al-khaṭawãt* (الخَطَوَاتُ) which is plural of *al-khaṭwah* (الخَطْوَةُ = one step). The phrase, "the footsteps of the Satan" refers to things leading to the Satanic aim, as footsteps lead to the walker's aim and destination. The Satan's aim is to mislead with polytheism; therefore, his footsteps are the things which lead to polytheism, and take the walker away from Allãh.

al-Amr (اَلأَمْرُ = to enjoin); the enjoiner imposes his own will on the enjoined, so that the latter does what the former wants. The Satan enjoins and orders by devilish insinuations and temptations encouraging man to do what the Satan wants. *as-Sũ'*(اَلسُّوءُ = evil) refers to the thing or action which is repugnant and repulsive to society. When it exceeds that limit, it becomes *al-faḥshã'* (الفَحْشَآءُ = indecency) ; it is *a maṣdar* like *as-sarrã'* (السَّرَّآءُ = prosperity; happiness) and *aḍ-Ḍarrã'* (الضَّرَّآءُ = adversity; distress).

Allãh has addressed these verses to all the men in general, because the order promulgated therein concerns all. As for the polytheists, they followed some self-imposed taboo, and falsely ascribed its promulgation to Allãh. It is reported, for example, that the tribes of Thaqīf, Khuzã'ah, Banu 'Ãmir ibn Ṣa'ṣa'ah and Banu Madlaj had forbidden themselves certain things of tilth and cattle, as well as some categories of camels, forging a lie against

Allãh. Similar baseless taboos are found in other countries and societies too.

Coming to the believers, there was a possibility that even after accepting Islam, some myths and superstitions might continue in their society, because of hereditary influence and national tradition. As a matter of fact, every new spiritual or temporal system concentrates in the beginning on eradicating and destroying the roots of the old system. After it is done, and if by that time it is left with some vitality and vigour – by good training and learning – then it starts mopping up operation by obliterating and erasing the remnants of that old system. Otherwise, the residue of that system is mixed with the new one, and the resulting mixture becomes a hybrid – neither this nor that.

Allãh ordered the people to eat from what is in the earth. To eat is to swallow after chewing. Sometimes the word "eating" is allegorically used for general usufruct of a property, for unrestricted right of its disposal, because eating is the basic activity of man, the main pillar of his life. For example, Allãh says: .. . *do not swallow up your property among yourselves by wrongful means, except that it be trading by your mutual consent . . .* (4:29). The verse under discussion may easily be interpreted in this wider sense, because it is general, not restricted. It would therefore mean: Eat, make use of, and enjoy the usufruct of the bounties of Allãh that are in the earth, and which the earth has prepared and kept in store for you by permission of Allãh; and it should be in a lawful and proper way. But you should see that there is no snag or hindrance in eating or using it, either from your own nature or from the nature of the earth. For example, there are some things which by their nature cannot be eaten; there are others which man by his nature does not want to eat; and lastly there are things which are eatable and useable, but your own nature rejects them and does not want to touch them at all, for example, a food that was obtained by unlawful means.

Thus, the words of Allãh, "eat the lawful (and) good things out of what is in the earth", promulgate general permission of eating all the lawful and good things of the earth, without any condition, without any restriction. But the next sentence,

"and do not follow the footsteps of the Satan", shows that there are some things (related to this lawful and good eating) which are called "the footsteps of the Satan". They are of two categories: either refraining from some food as a result of following the Satan, or eating it for the same reason. Thereafter, Allãh mentions a general principle applicable to all that is done for following the Satan, that it is evil and indecency, as well as speaking against Allãh what one does not know. Desisting from a food is not allowed except when Allãh is pleased with such abstaining; likewise one should not audaciously use any thing without the permission of Allãh. Eating out of what is in the earth is not lawful and good unless Allãh permits and allows it. And He has allowed it in this and similar verses. Also, one should ascertain that a particular thing is not forbidden or prohibited by Allãh, as He says after a few verses: *He has only forbidden you what dies of itself, and blood, and flesh of swine . . .* (2:173).

The meaning of the verse then would be as follows, and Allãh knows better: Eat out of what is in the earth, from the bounties of Allãh which He has created for you, as He has made
them lawful and good for you; and do not leave some of them abstaining from them, because that would be evil and indecency, and you would be guilty of speaking against Allãh what you do not know; it would be tantamount to making your own law against the law of Allãh; and you would thus be following the footsteps of the Satan.

The verse thus shows that:

First: Man has been given a general permission for unrestricted use of all that is in the earth – except the things excluded from this general rule by other proofs. Allãh may forbid a thing as easily as He permits it.

Second: One who abstains, without any reasonable proof, from that which Allãh has made lawful, in fact promulgates his own law – which he is forbidden to do.

Third: Following the footsteps of the Satan means worshipping Allãh in a way Allãh has not allowed, by a method He has not approved. Allãh has not forbidden any walking except that in

which man puts his foot in the footsteps of the Satan, making his walk conform with that of the Satan; thus he would be following the Satan's footsteps.

It may be inferred from above that, although the reason given of this prohibition (*He only enjoins you evil and indecency . . .*) demands that man should neither proceed to do any thing without knowledge, nor refrain from any thing without knowledge; but this is not what this verse is meant for; because it is not following the footsteps of the Satan, though it is following the Satan.

QUR'ÃN : *He only enjoins you evil and indecency, and that you may speak against Allãh what you do not know:* Evil and indecency are attributes of action, *vis-à-vis,* speech. It shows that what the Satan enjoins is confined to the action that is evil and indecency, and the word that is spoken without knowledge.

QUR'ÃN: *And when it is said to them, "Follow what Allãh has revealed," they say: "Nay! we follow what we found our fathers upon": al-Ilfã'* (اَلإِلْفَآءُ = to find). The verse supports what we have inferred from the preceding verse, regarding the footsteps of the Satan.

QUR'ÃN: *What! and though their fathers had no sense at all, nor did they follow the right way:* It is rebuttal of their saying; it shows that they speak without knowledge and without ascertaining the truth; and it is a thing which reason rejects. They say, "We follow what we found our fathers upon." It is an unconditional declaration – they intend to follow their fathers in all conditions, without looking at their qualifications and credentials. They are determined to follow their fathers even if they had no sense, even if they had gone astray. They claimed that whatever their fathers did was correct. But such claim, such declaration, is just a talk without knowing; it leads one to say what no sensible person would ever say – if his attention was drawn to its absurdity. There would be no blame on them if they followed their fathers only in those things which they (the fathers) had knowledge of, and concerning which they followed the right way; if they followed them in such things

knowing well that their fathers had their knowledge and had been on right way, it would not be counted as following without knowledge.

It shows that the phrase, "What! and though their fathers had no sense at all, nor did they follow the right way," is not intended as an exaggeration, although one may think that negation of all sense and knowledge from their fathers – who certainly knew many things concerning their life and livelihood – was intended as an exaggeration. But it is not so. Actually, the verse exposes the absurdity of their unconditional declaration by pointing out a situation in which no one would allow the following.

QUR'ÃN: *And the parable of those who disbelieve is as the parable of one who calls out to that which hears no more than a call and cry: al-Mathal* (اَلْمَثَلُ = proverb; parable, adage); also it is used for attribute and comparison, as Allãh says: *See how they coin comparisons for thee. So they have gone astray, therefore they shall not be able to find a way* (25:9). *an-Na'īq* (اَلنَّعِيقُ = admonishing cry of a shepherd to his sheep); *an-nidã'* (اَلنِّدَآءُ = to call) is *maṣdar* of *nãdã, yunãdī, munãdãtan* (نَادى ، يُنَادِي، مُنَادَاةً = he called, he calls, to call) ; it is more particular than *ad-du'ã'* (الدُّعآءُ = to call), because *an-nidã'* is reserved for calling in a loud voice, while *ad-du'ã'* is general. The meaning of the verse is as follows, and Allãh knows better: And O Prophet! your parable, when you call the unbelievers to the truth, is like a man who calls out to the animals while the animals do not understand what he says, except that they hear a call and cry, and stop in their tracks as soon as they hear it without understanding any thing spoken. The unbelievers are, therefore, deaf, they do not hear any talk which would benefit them; dumb, not speaking any sensible word; blind, not seeing any worthwhile thing. Thus they do not understand any thing, because their windows of understanding are closed shut.

It appears that there is a sort of reversal in this parable. Although it begins as a parable of those who disbelieve, it changes to describe the shepherd, the caller to guidance; it is in fact the likeness of the Prophet not of those who were being

called by him to the right path. But as the three adjectives deducted from it (*deaf, dumb* [and] *blind, so they do not understand,*) were attributes of the disbelievers – not of him who was calling them to the truth – it was highly appropriate to ascribe the parable to the disbelievers, and not to the Messenger of Allãh (s.a.w.a.). Thus, there appears to be a reversal in the parable.

TRADITIONS

'Abdu 'r-Raḥmãn says: "I asked Abu 'Abdillãh about a man who vowed to slaughter his child. He said: 'That is from the footsteps of the Satan.' " (*at-Tahdhīb*)

Manṣũr ibn Ḥãzim said: "Abu Abdillãh (a.s.) said to me: 'Have not you heard about Ṭãriq? Verily, Ṭãriq was a cattle-dealer in Medina. He came to Abu Ja'far and said: " O Abu Ja'far! I have taken an oath by divorce (of my wives), emancipation (of my slaves) and vow." Thereupon, (Abu Ja'far, a.s.) said to Him: " O Ṭãriq! verily this is from the footsteps of the Satan." ' "

Abu Ja'far (a.s.) said: "Every oath taken in the name of other than Allãh, is from the footsteps of the Satan." (al-'Ayyãshī)

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said: "When a man takes oath for not doing a thing – while what he has sworn against, its doing is better than its leaving – then he should do that which is better; and there is no penalty on him; surely it (i.e., such oath) is only from the footsteps of the Satan." (*al-Kãfī*)

The author says: The traditions, as you see, interpret the footsteps of the Satan as the deeds supposed to bring one nearer to Allãh, while in fact they are not so, because the *sharī'ah* does not recognize them – as we have explained above. Of course, as for the divorce, etc. (mentioned in the second tradition), there is an additional reason for the invalidity of such oaths; and that is making it conditional on some contingency in future; and it is against the principle of immediate and unconditional effecting of such transactions. (It is a topic of jurisprudence.) Oath in the name of other than Allãh refers to an oath which has no validity in the *sharī'ah,* and to swearing by what Allãh has not sworn by

and to which He has given no excellence.

al-Bãqir (a.s.) said about the words of Allãh, *And the parable of those who disbelieve is as the parable of one who calls out. . .:* "That is, their likeness when you call them to the faith is like the caller who calls out to the cattle which understands nothing other than hearing a voice."

A MORAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL DISCOURSE ON BLIND IMITATION

Opinions and beliefs are of two kinds, which we shall call theoretical and practical knowledges. The theoretical knowledge is the one not directly related to action, for example, theorems of geometry, propositions of physics and issues of metaphysics. Practical knowledge, on the other hand, is directly related to action, for example, the moral teachings concerned with what to do and what not to do. The only way to acquire the theoretical knowledge is through rational proofs or the senses. The only way to get the practical knowledge is to follow that which leads to man's felicity, and to refrain from that which leads to infelicity or hinders the felicity. Apart from that, it is merely a superstition to believe in what is not known to be the truth and fact (in theoretical knowledge) and what is not known to be good or evil (in practical knowledge).

Man, when left to his pristine nature, does not accept superstitious ideas based on blindness and ignorance. His opinions are based on the demands of nature which wants him to find out the causes of the things, and exhorts him to strive for real perfection.

But sometimes his sentiments and feelings aroused by imagination – and especially the fear and the hope – make him to believe in myths and superstitions. What happens is this: Imagination creates some images in his mind which produce fear or hope. That feeling of fear or hope then preserves that image and does not let the psyche forget it. Let us say, a man finds himself in a valley; he is alone and the moonless night is pitch-dark; he cannot see his own hands. He has no light to illuminate his surroundings,

no companion to share his thoughts with. Then his imagination takes hold of him. Every formless figure appears to him as a fearful ugly ghost intent on putting him to death. Then he sees the ghouls moving, coming and going ascending to the skies and descending to the earth. The imagination keeps producing these figures and he remains awake, frightened out of his wits. Later on, he describes that horrifying experience to someone, graphically describing the devilish antics of those ghosts and ghouls, and the hearer stands aghast, his eye askance. In this way the 'belief' in these things spreads – while in fact it is just an imaginary "thing" having no reality at all.

Sometimes this superstition reawakens the instinct of self-defence in man, and he devises some rites to ward off the harmful effects of this imaginary "being"; and exhorts others to do like-wise, so that they too would be safe. Thus, a superstitious rite takes root in the society and grows.

Man, from the earliest days of his existence, has remained in the tight grip of myths and superstitions; and the situation is not different even today. And it is not confined to the eastern nations – as many people think. It is prevalent among westerners in equal, if not greater, degree.

The elite group, that is, the scholars, have been trying, since time immemorial, to eradicate the rites and ceremonials arising from deep-rooted superstitions which have kept the common people enthralled. They try to awaken the public to the reality – but to no avail. It is because man has never been able to free himself from following the others in theoretical views and real knowledge on one side, and sentiments and feelings on the other. We can see that the treatment has not been successful, and the situation goes from bad to worse.

The most astonishing is the myth prevalent today among the scientists and sociologists. They say that the foundation of modern science is laid on the senses and experiment; it rejects every thing that is not perceivable through the senses and which cannot be experimented upon. Also, according to them, the civilization is based on the urge of perfection; it seeks perfection in every possible direction, as much as it can.

But strangely enough, this view itself is a myth which they are following. The natural sciences look only at the factors and faculties of the nature. In other words, these material sciences search only for the hitherto unknown peculiarities of the matter. So far as the things beyond matter are concerned, these material sciences have no way to reject or refute them – as they are beyond their scope, outside their jurisdiction. As such it is a clear superstition and myth to reject metaphysical and immaterial things – just because the material sciences (which admittedly cannot see beyond matter) have not been able to see those things which are admittedly beyond the reach of matter.

Likewise, it is another myth to base the civilization on the above-mentioned urge of perfection of the society. This perfection of society, this felicity of civilization, often demands sacrifices from its members. It becomes necessary for some people to offer their individual happiness on the altar of the society; they lose their all, including the lives, in defence of their country or their cause; an individual is thus deprived of his happiness and his life in order that the society may be saved. Obviously, no man will voluntarily accept these personal privations unless he believes in this pursuit of society's perfection, and unless he looks at that sacrifice itself as a personal perfection. But that sacrifice is not a perfection for himself – it is a nullity, a deprivation. Of course, it may be a perfection – if we accept it as such – for the society, *per se,* not for himself. But man had invented society as an instrument for his own benefit; he had not bargained that the role would be reversed and he would be used as a tool for the society's benefit.

It is to overcome this basic difficulty that the societies have invented some myths. They say to their members that man by sacrificing himself in the way of the society earns eternity because his good name is always remembered with reverence and affection – and man should strive for that eternal life. But evidently it is nothing but a story, a myth. Where is this supposed life once the man is dead? There is nothing for him except death and oblivion. But the society says, it is life – merely a name without any substance !

Also, they say: It is necessary for man to obey the laws even

if they are tough and irksome to him. He should patiently bear the loss of some of his happiness, some of the things he earnestly desires, in order that the society may prosper, the civilization may attain its perfection. In this way, that partial deprivation will lead to his own perfection – through the perfection of the society. He is thus made to believe that the perfection of the society is his own perfection. But it is merely a myth.

The perfection of the society may be the man's perfection, when both perfections go hand in hand, when both are one and the same. Otherwise, not. Why should a man look at society's perfection as his own perfection, and to good remembrance as his lasting glory; and especially so if he can easily attain to his aims and goals – even if through injustice and oppression – and when his strength and power surpasses that of his competitors? The same question may be asked in respect of a powerful nation, *vis-à-vis,* the others. And it is not just a theoretical question. We see every day how the powerful nations go on exploiting the weaker ones. These super powers tread on the prone bodies of the weaker peoples, crush their dignity and self-respect, expropriate their natural resources, and put the whole populace under their yoke. (Once it was called imperialism and colonialism, now it is neo-colonialism. Result in both cases is the same:) weaker people are subjugated and enslaved. (They say they are there to help these people in their difficulties – and in this process they rob them of their freedom and dignity.) They cure a disease by putting the patient to death.

What is the guidance given by the Qur'ãn in this respect? In theoretical field, it tells man to follow the commandments of Allãh and not to speak without knowledge. In practical affairs, it directs him to seek only what is pleasing to Allãh: if it tallies with his own desires, then he shall get happiness of both worlds; if it does not agree with it, if he has to sacrifice his own wish for the pleasure of Allãh, then he shall get great reward from Allãh; and what is with Allãh is better and everlasting.

Also, the materialist say: Belief in religion is a blind following which the science does not allow. Such belief is a remnant of the superstitions of the second of the four periods through

which mankind has passed. There was first the period of mythology, followed by that of religion. Then came the era of philosophy which was replaced by that of science. Presently, we are living in this era, and it follows the knowledge and rejects myths and superstitions.

COMMENT: This in itself is a myth. These people talk without knowledge.

They have said: "Belief in religion is a blind following." The fact is otherwise. Religion is a composite entity; it consists of the gnosis of the beginning and final destination of man, the laws regulating the rites of worship and social dealings (which are based on revelations brought by the prophets whose truth was definitely proved by rational proofs), and some information given by the same truthful prophets. Evidently, when one follows the religion he follows the knowledge, because the truth of the prophet concerned was fully established by proofs.

We have written something on the topic of "following", under the verse: *Surely Allãh commands you that you should sacrifice a cow* (2:67).

There is another amusing aspect of this objection. This disparaging condemnation comes from those who have got nothing in their hands except blind imitation and who uncritically follow their desire, without ascertaining its value. This aping encompasses their whole being, right from their principles of life to the social customs – be it food or drink, dress or residence, marriage or other social relations. Of course, they have given a new name to this imitation: They say, they have adopted the ways of the developed nations. Thus the blind following remains firmly-rooted in society, but the name is discarded; the bottle is the same, the label has been changed. The result: "Do as the Romans do" becomes a scientific adage, a sign of social advancement; and: *do not follow desire, lest it should lead you astray* . . . (38:26) is treated as a blind religious following, a superstitious view !!

They have divided the progress of human species into four stages. But what we definitely know concerning the history of

philosophy and religions refutes this division. It is wrong to say that philosophy came after religion. Ibrãhīm (a.s.) brought his religion long after the rise of philosophy in India, Egypt and Chaldea; and the religion of ‘Isã (a.s.) came after the Greek philosophy. Likewise, the religion of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), that is, Islam, was promulgated after the philosophy of Greece and Alexandria. In short, philosophy reached its zenith long before the rise of religion. We have also mentioned earlier that the religion of monotheism was the first and earliest of all religions and systems.

The Qur’ãn divides the path of human progress in a different way. There were two periods only: First, the period of simplicity when all were of one nation, and then the period when materialism and revolt took its hold. We shall describe it in detail under the verse: *Mankind was but one nation; so Allãh sent the prophets* . . . (2:213).

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يا أيها الذين آمنوا كلوا من طيبات ما رزقناكم واشكروا
لله إن كنتم إياه تعبدون ـــ ١٧٢ . إنما حرم عليكم الميتة والدم
ولحم الخنزير وما أهل به لغير الله فمن اضطر غير باغ ولا عاد
فلا إثم عليه إن الله غفور رحيم ـــ ١٧٣ . إن الذين يكتمون ما
أنزل الله من الكتاب ويشترون به ثمنا قليلا أولئك ما يأكلون
في بطونهم إلا النار ولا يكلمهم الله يوم القيامة ولا يزكيهم ولهم
عذاب أليم ـــ ١٧٤ . أولئك الذين اشتروا الضلالة بالهدى والعذاب
بالمغفرة فما أصبرهم على النار ـــ ١٧٥ . ذلك بأن الله نزل الكتاب
بالحق وإن الذين اختلفوا في الكتاب لفي شقاق بعيد ـــ ١٧٦ .

O you who believe! eat of the good things that We have provided you with, and give thanks to Allãh if Him it is that you worship (172). *He has only forbidden you what dies of itself, and that over which any other* (name) *than* (that of) *Allãh has been invoked; but whoever is forced* (to it), *not revolting, nor exceeding the limit, no sin shall be upon him; surely Allãh is Forgiving, Merciful* (173). *Surely those who cancel what Allãh has revealed of the Book and take for it a small price, they eat nothing but fire into their bellies, and Allãh will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them, and they shall have a painful chastisement* (174). *These are they who*

have bought error for the guidance, and chastisement for forgiveness; Oh! how (bold) *they are to endure fire* (175). *This is because Allãh has revealed the Book with the truth; and surely those who differ in* (matter of) *the Book are in a great opposition* (176).

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COMMENTARY

QUR'ÃN : *O you who believe! eat of the good things that We have provided you with:* The preceding verses were addressed to the "men" in general; now a selected group among them (i.e., the believers) is especially spoken to. Thus, this talk issues forth from the preceding one. It seems as though Allãh is turning away from an intractable and self-opinioned group that was impervious to reason, and looks towards those who would listen to, and accept the call of, the Speaker, because they believe in Him. The difference in the two speeches springs from the change of the audience. The believers were expected to accept what was said to them. Therefore, they were told to "eat from the good things that We have provided you with". The expression is more loving than the previous impersonal phrase addressed to the general public: "eat the lawful (and) good things out of what is in the earth". The loving expression of the verse under discussion paves the way for the direction that they should be thankful to Allãh alone, because they are monotheists, they do not worship anyone other than Allãh. It was for this very reason that Allãh said, "that We have provided you with", and did not say, 'what you have been provided with', or "what is in the earth". The Qur'ãnic expression (in active voice) shows that Allãh is known to them and near them, is affectionate and compassionate to them.

The Arabic phrase translated as "the good things that We have provided you with", would be literally translated as 'the good things of what We have provided you with' – in genitive case. Apparently the adjective (*the good things*) is the first construct, related to the second construct (*what We have provided you with*);

and means in effect, ‘eat from Our sustenance that is all good’. This meaning is appropriate in this context which is meant to show Allãh’s kindness and compassion for the believers. The phrase is not meant to restrict the second construct with the first one. In other words, it does not mean, ‘eat from the good provisions, not from the bad ones’: because such meaning would be quite irrelevant in this setting in which Allãh wishes to remove prohibition, telling them not to abstain from any provision given by Allãh – as, such behaviour would be a self-imposed unauthorized legislation, would be a talk without knowledge.

QUR’ÃN: *and give thanks to Allãh if Him it is that you worship:* Apparently it should have been ‘give thanks to Us’, but the Qur’ãn says, “give thanks to Allãh”. This expression is more appropriate for the theme of monotheism which the verse leads to. And for the same reason the next phrase, “if Him it is that you worship”, was preferred to a shorter, ‘if you worship Him’. The present expression restricts and confines the worship to Allãh alone.

QUR’ÃN: *He has only forbidden you what dies of itself, and blood, and flesh of swine, and that over which any other* (name) *than* (that of) *Allãh has been invoked:* Invoking any name other than Allãh’s, means slaughtering for any thing other than Allãh, for example, sacrificing for idols.

QUR’ÃN: *But whoever is forced* (to it), *not revolting, nor exceeding the limit:* That is, when he is not unjust, nor does he exceed the limit; is driven to it because of emergency. The meaning is therefore as follows: Whoever is forced to eat some of these forbidden things, because of some emergency, while he does not like at all to go against the law of Allãh, nor does he exceed the limit, there shall be no blame on him. But if he was trapped into that emergency because of his own revolting behaviour or because he had exceeded the limit and was then driven to that necessity, then he is not allowed to eat from these things. The sentence, “surely Allãh is Forgiving, Merciful,” shows that the above permission is just a concession given by Allãh to the believers;

otherwise, the basis of prohibition is present even in this case.

QUR'ÃN : *Surely those who conceal what Allãh has revealed of the Book:* It is an allusion to the People of the Book. There were many good and lawful things – in the rites of worship and other matters – which their elders and leaders had arbitrarily forbidden them – while they had got the Book and that Book contained no sanction against those good things. These people did not conceal what they did but only because they wanted to protect their high position and prestige in the community, and because they did not like to stem the flow of gifts, riches and properties which their power supposedly entitled them to.

This verse unambiguously proves that a man's deeds are embodied and assume the form of a body; and it is the deeds that finally emerge as their own results. In this verse, Allãh first says that their action of taking a small price for the Divine Revelation is one and the same with their eating the fire into their bellies. Then the description of their concealing and price taking is changed to that of buying error for the guidance; then this gives way to bartering chastisement for forgiveness. Then it ends on the words, "Oh! how (bold) they are to endure fire". Thus, their misdeed itself is transformed into the fire, although what they had done was to conceal the revelation and to continue on that behaviour.

TRADITIONS

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said about the words of Allãh, *but whoever is forced* (to it), *not revolting, nor exceeding the limit:* *al-Bãghī* (اَلْبَاغِيْ = revolting) is one who desires hunting[1], and *al- ʿãdī* (اَلْعَادِيْ = exceeding the limit) is thief. They are not allowed to eat dead (animal) even if they are faced with emergency. It is forbidden to them. This (concession) does not cover them as it

1. Another meaning of *al-bãghī* is "desirous"; the explanation in the tradition is based on this meaning. (*tr.*)

does (other) Muslims. And they are not allowed to shorten the prayer (in such journeys).” (*al-Kãfī*)

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said: *“al-Bãghī* is unjust and *al-‘ãdī* is usurper.” (al-‘Ayyãshī)

Ḥammãd narrates from the same Imãm that he said: *“al-Bãghī* is one who revolts against the Imãm, and *al-‘ãdī* is thief.”

Abu Ja‘far and Abu ‘Abdillãh (a.s.) have said: “Not revolting against the Imãm of the Muslims, nor transgressing the path of the righteous ones with disobedience.” (*Majma‘ul-bayãn*)

The author says: All these are various applications of these words; and they support the meaning we have given earlier.

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said about the words of Allãh, *Oh! how* (bold) *they are to endure fire:”* (It means,) how bold they are to commit the deeds which, they know, will take them to the fire.” (*al-Kãfī*)

‘Ali ibn Ibrãhīm narrates from aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) about this sentence: “How daring they are to (risk) the fire.” (*Majma‘ul-bayãn*)

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said: “How active they are in the deeds of the people of the fire.”

The author says: These traditions are in fact similar in their meanings: The first tradition explains boldness for fire with boldness in perpetrating the causes of the fire; the second one gives its meaning as daring to enter the fire; the third one interprets it as boldness to commit sins that would lead to the fire – and it is almost the same with the meaning of the first tradition.

* * * * *

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَٰكِنَّ
الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى
الْمَالَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ
وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَوٰةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَوٰةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا
عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ
صَدَقُوا وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ ـــ ١٧٧ .

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteousness is the one who believes in Allãh and the last day and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and gives away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars and for (the emancipation of) *the captives, and keeps up prayer and pays the* zakãt, *and the performers of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflict – these are they who are true and these are they who are the pious* (177).

* * * * *

COMMENTARY

It is said that when the *qiblah* was changed from Baytu '1-Maqdis to the Ka'bah, there ensued a long drawn out controversy

and conflict in the public. It was then that this verse was revealed.

QUR'ÃN: *It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West: al-Birr* (اَلبِرُّ = righteousness); *al-barr* (اَلبَرُّ = righteous), it is a perpetual adjective. *Qibal* (قِبَل = towards, in the direction of), *al-qiblah* (اَلقِبْلَةُ = a certain direction) is derived from it. *Dhul-qurbã*(ذو القُرْبى = relative); *al-yatãmã* (اَليَتَامى) is plural of *al- yatīm* (اَليَتِيْمُ = orphan; he who has lost his father) ; *al-masãkīn* (اَلمَسَاكِيْنُ) is plural of *al-miskīn* (اَلمِسْكِيْنُ = miserably poor, one who suffers a worse condition than *al-faqīr* (اَلفَقِيْرُ = poor). *Ibnu 's-sabil* (اِبْنُ السَّبِيْلِ = one stranded in journey) ; *ar-riqãb* (اَلرِّقَابُ) is plural of *ar-raqabah* (اَلرَّقَبَةُ = neck; it refers to slave). *al-Ba'sã'* (البَأسَآءُ) is *a maṣdar* like *al-bu's* (اَلبُؤْسُ), both having the same meaning: hardship, poverty. *aḍ-Ḍarrã'* (الضَّرَّآءُ) too is *a maṣdar* like *aḍ-ḍarr* (الضَّرُّ) and both mean affliction with injury or loss, for example, when a man is afflicted with a disease, injury, or loss of property or child. *al-Ba's* (اَلبأسُ = intensity of war).

QUR'ÃN: *but righteousness is the one who believes in Allãh:* Instead of defining righteousness, the verse turns to describing the righteous ones; thus it introduces the people in the light of their attributes. In this way, it points to the fact that abstract ideals and abstruse ideas have no value in Islam unless they appear in concrete shape in the character of a man. It is a well-known style of the Qur'ãn that it explains and defines a condition and a rank by introducing the people having that rank and condition; it is never satisfied with mere theoretical explanations of good and bad, virtue and vice.

The words, "the one who believes in Allãh and the last day . . .," define the righteous ones, and explain their real state. The verse introduces them with all three aspects of belief, deeds and morals, in three stages. the first stage begins with the words, "the one who believes in Allãh;" the second is the sentence, "these are they who are true;" and the third is, "and these are they who are the pious."

Allãh begins the first stage, saying: "the one who believes

in Allãh and the last day and the angels and the Book and the prophets". It is a comprehensive description of all the true gnosis which Allãh wants His servants to believe in. The belief referred to in this verse is the perfect belief which can never fail to produce its effect. When a believer attains to this stage of faith, his heart is never assailed by any doubt or confusion; he does not take a dim view of whatever befalls him, nor is he offended if afflicted with a misfortune. Likewise, his morals and actions are safe from adverse influences. This interpretation is further supported by the phrase, "these are they who are true". Truth, in this verse, is general and unconditional; it is not restricted to any condition of man's heart or any activity of his limbs. It means, they are real believers, true in their belief; as Allãh says: *But no! by your Lord! they do not believe until they make you a judge of that which has become a matter of disagreement among them, and then do not find any straitness in their hearts as to what you have decided and submit with total submission* (4:65). Thus, their condition fits the fourth stage of the belief, described under the verse: *When his Lord said to him, Submit* (yourself), *he said:* "*I submit myself to the Lord of the worlds"* (2:131).

After description of belief, Allãh mentions some of their deeds: "and gives away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars and for (the emancipation of) the captives, and keeps up prayer and pays the *zakãt".* Here their prayer is mentioned, and it concerns the Divine Worship. Allãh says: . . . *surely prayer keeps* (one) *away from indecency and evil* . . . (29:45); also, He says: . . . *and keep up prayer for My remembrance* (20:14). It is followed by mention of *zakãt;* and it is a financial obligation promulgated for economic good of the society. And before it all, the verse refers to their giving away wealth to various groups; this habit of theirs spreads the good and enlarges the circle of non-obligatory munificence, in order that the need of the poor may be fulfilled and their condition improved.

Lastly, the verse cites some of their excellent moral characteristics: "and the performers of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in time

of conflict". *al-'Ahd* (الْعَهْدُ = to promise; to commit oneself to something). The verse mentions "their promise" unconditionally. Yet, it does not cover the belief and the resulting obligation of following the laws of the *sharī'ah* (as some people have said). Why? Because on going further we find the proviso, "when they make a promise" ; and clearly acceptance of true faith and submission to its concomitants is an unconditional obligation; and is obligatory on all the people at all the times. It does not depend on one's commitment. However, the "promise", by its generality, covers every commitment made by man. For example, when he says: I'll surely do it; or, I'll never do it. It includes every deal made in business transactions, every word spoken in social and family circles.

Patience is steadfastness in face of hardship, be it a series of benumbing misfortunes or a fight against formidable adversaries.

These two excellent virtues – fulfilment of promise and patience – do not cover all the necessary virtues; but when they are found somewhere, the other virtues invariably always follow suit. One of these two virtues (patience in hardships) has a passive quality, while the other (fulfilling the promise) has an active role. By mentioning them, Allãh in effect says that when they say something they surely proceed to do it, and do not withdraw from it even if they have to face difficulties.

The second stage of introduction is contained in the phrase, "these are they who are true". Truth is a comprehensive virtue, encompassing all attributes of knowledge and action. Truth is an inseparable concomitant of all basic virtues – continence, bravery, wisdom and justice – and of their branches., Man's life is made up of his belief, words and actions. When he is true, all the three aspects conform with each other. He does not do except what he says, and does not say except that which he believes.

Man by instinct accepts the right and truth; and even if he pretends otherwise, he submits to it in his heart. When he believes in the right truthfully, his word conforms with his belief, and his action with his word. It is then that he reaches the perfection in all three aspects of belief, morality and deeds. His faith becomes pure, his character virtuous and his deeds good.

Allãh says: O *You who believe! fear Allãh and be with the true ones* (9:119). The restrictive style, "these are they who are true", puts emphasis on the description of the righteous. It means – and Allãh knows better – that if you want to find the true ones, then these are the righteous.

The third and final stage of their introduction is the phrase, "and these are they who are the pious": This restrictive style looks at the level of perfection. Piety cannot be complete and perfect, unless righteousness and truth have attained their completion and perfection.

The attributes ascribed here to the righteous are the same which Allãh has described in other places. Allãh says: *Surely the righteous shall drink of a cup the admixture of which is camphor. A fountain from which the servants of Allãh shall drink; they shall make it to flow a* (goodly) *flowing forth. They fulfil* vows *and fear a day the evil of which shall be spreading far and wide. And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive. We only feed you for Allãh's sake; we desire from you neither reward nor thanks; surely we fear from our Lord a stern, distressful day. Therefore Allãh will guard them from the evil of that day and cause them to meet with radiance and happiness; and reward them, because they were patient, with garden and silk* (76:5–12). These verses, about some righteous personalities, describe their attributes of belief in Allãh and the last day, their spending for the sake of Allãh, their fulfilling the vows and their patience. Again, Allãh says: *Nay! Most surely the record of the righteous shall be in the* 'Illiyyīn. *And what will make you know what the* 'Illiyyīn *is? It is a written book; see it those who are near* (to Allãh). *Most surely the righteous shall be in bliss, on thrones, they shall gaze. You will recognize in their faces the radiance of bliss. They are made to quaff of a pure drink that is sealed. The sealing of it is* (with) *musk; and for that let the aspirers aspire. And the admixture of it is a water of Tasnīm, a fountain from which drink they who are drawn nearer* (to Allãh) (83:18 -28).

If you meditate on these verses in conjunction with those quoted above, you will see the reality of their attributes and their

final destination. These verses praise the righteous that they are servants of Allãh, and are drawn near to Him. Now, Allãh describes His servants in these words: *Surely as regards* My *servants, thou hast no authority over them* (15:42) ; and He says about those drawn near to Him: *And the foremost are the foremost; these are they who are drawn near* (to Allãh), *in the gardens of bliss* (56:10-12).

It is now clear that the righteous are the foremost in this world in reaching nearer to Allãh, as they are foremost in the next world in attaining to the bounties of the garden.

If you continue looking at the condition of the righteous in the light of these verses you will unearth many hidden nuggets of spiritual reality.

The above discourse shows that the righteous are in the highest, that is, the fourth, stage of belief, as we have explained earlier. Allãh says: *Those who believe and do not mix their faith with iniquity, those are they who have the security and they are those who go aright* (6:82).

QUR'ÃN : *and the patient in distress:* The word "patient" in the Arabic text is in accusative case while the other attributes are in indicative. This change has been effected to point out its excellence, to show its importance.

Also, it has been said that when a speech becomes a bit lengthy, several adjectives following each other, then the Arabs break the monotony by interposing negatives between the positives, or by exchanging accusative and indicative cases.

TRADITIONS

The Prophet said: "Whosoever acted in accordance with this verse, he surely perfected (his) faith."

The author says: Its reason is clear from the explanation written above. az-Zajjãj and al-Farrã' are reported to have said: "This verse is reserved for the sinless prophets, because nobody, except the prophets, can perform these things as they should be."

But this comment shows that they had not pondered on it properly. They seem confused regarding spiritual ranks. The verses of the Chapter of the Man (76:5–12) quoted above, were revealed about the family members of the Messenger of Allãh (s.a.w.a.) ; Allãh in those verses has named them "the righteous", although they were not prophets.

Of course, the rank of the righteous is very high, and their position is of very great importance. Allãh praises the men of understanding saying that they: *remember Allãh standing and sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth:* Then He quotes their prayer, which shows that their highest aspiration was that their Lord should join them to the righteous: *and make us die with the righteous* (3:190-3).

al-Ḥakīm at-Tirmidhī narrates from Abũ ʻÃmir ash-Shaʻbī that he said: "I said: 'O Messenger of Allãh! What is the completion of righteousness?' He said: 'That you should do in private what you do in public.' " (*ad-Durru 'l-manthũr*)

Abu Jaʻfar and Abu ʻAbdillãh (a.s.) said: "The near of kin are the relatives of the Prophet." (*Majma 'u 'l-bayãn*)

The author says: It is an application of this verse, keeping in view the verses of *near relatives* (42:23).

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said: *"al-Faqīr* (poor) is he who does not ask from the people; and *al-miskīn is* of more straitened circumstances than the "poor"; and *al-bã's* (اَلبـآئِسُ) is the most wretched of all." (*al-kãfī*)

Abũ Jaʻfar (a.s.) said: "The wayfarer is the one stranded in the way." (*Majma 'u 'l-bayãn*)

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) was asked about an al-mukãtib (المُكَـاتِبُ)[1] who, after making a partial payment was unable to pay (the balance

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1. In Islam a slave was allowed to enter into an agreement with his master. This agreement, called *al-mukãtabah,* entitled him to gain his freedom on payment of stipulated amount. Such a slave was called *al-mukãtib.* (*tr.*)

of the stipulated money of) his al-mukãtabah (الْمُكَاتَـبَةُ) . He (a.s.) said: "It will be paid on his behalf from the money of *aṣ-ṣadaqah* (الصَدَقَـةُ = charity money; also *zakãt*), because Allãh, the Mighty, the Great, says: *and for* (the emancipation of) *the captives."* (*at-Tahdhīb*)

The same Imãm said about the words of Allãh, *and the patient in distress and affliction:* "In hunger, and thirst and fear." And he (a.s.) said about the word, *and in time of conflict:* "In the fighting." (*at-Tafsīr,* al-Qummī)

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يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِصَاصُ فِي الْقَتْلَى الْحُرُّ بِالْحُرِّ
وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ وَالْأُنْثَى بِالْأُنْثَى فَمَنْ عُفِيَ لَهُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ شَيْءٌ فَاتِّبَاعٌ
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَدَاءٌ إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَانٍ ذَٰلِكَ تَخْفِيفٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ
فَمَنِ اعْتَدَىٰ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ فَلَهُ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ـ ١٧٨ . وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ
حَيٰوةٌ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ـ ١٧٩ .

O you who believe! retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the slain; the free for the free, and the slave for the slave, and the female for the female; but if any remission is made to any one by his (aggrieved) *brother, then* (the demand for the bloodwit) *should be made according to usage, and payment should be made to him in a good manner; this is an alleviation from your Lord and a mercy; so whoever exceeds the limit after this, he shall have a painful chastisement* (178). *And there is life for you in the retaliation, O men of understanding, that you may guard yourselves* (against evil) (179).

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COMMENTARY

QUR'ÃN: *O you who believe! retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the slain; the free for the free . . .:* The verse is ad-dressed to the believers. It means that the law promulgated

herein applies to the Muslims only. As regards the non-Muslims – whether under protection of an Islamic State or not – the verse is silent about them.

Some people think that this verse has abrogated the verse 5:45 (*life is for life*)*;* because it does not allow killing of a free person for a slave, or of a man for a woman. But actually there is no room for this supposition. The position of this verse *vis-à-vis* the verse 5:45 is like that of an explanation *vis-à-vis* its text.

al-Qiṣãṣ (القِصَاصُ = retaliation) is the *maṣdar* of *qãṣṣa yuqãṣṣu* (قَاصَّ يُقَاصُّ = he followed, he follows) ; an Arab says: *qaṣṣa atharahu* (قَصَّ أثَـرَهُ = he followed someone's tracks). Another derivative is *al-qṣṣãṣ* (القَصَّاصُ = story-teller) – it is as though he follows the tracks of the past generations. Retaliation is called *al-qiṣãṣ* because it follows the footsteps of the offender, giving him a punishment similar to that which he had inflicted upon his victim.

QUR'ÃN: *but if any remission is made to any one by his* (aggrieved) *brother:* Its literal translation is: then whoever is remitted any thing by his brother. "whoever" refers to the murderer; the heir/s of the murdered person may waive his/their right of retaliation. Therefore, "any thing" refers to that right; it is used here as a common noun, in order that the rule may cover all possibilities, whether there was a full remission or partial. Let us say, for example, that there are many heirs and only some of them waive their right; then there shall be no retaliation; instead the blood-money will be imposed. The heir of the murdered person who has the right of retaliation) has extraordinarily been described here as the "brother" of the murderer; this expression has been used to awaken the feeling of love and kindness in the heart of the aggrieved party, and gives a hint to him that remission and forgiveness is highly preferable in the eyes of Allãh.

QUR'ÃN: *then* (the demand for the bloodwit) *should be made according to the usage, and payment should be made to him in a good manner:* Its literal translation is: then following according to usage, and payment to him in a good manner. Both phrase

are subjects with their predicates implied. Thus literally it would mean: then it is obligatory on the aggrieved "brother" to follow that remission with demand for the blood-money according to usage; and it is obligatory on the murderer to pay it to the aggrieved brother, that is, heir of the slain, in a good manner without any annoying delay.

QUR'ÃN: *this is an alleviation from your Lord and a mercy:* The permission to commute the retaliation into blood-money is an alleviation from your Lord, and therefore, once effected, it cannot be changed. The heir of the slain person cannot revert to retaliation after granting remission. If he transgresses the limit and retaliates after remission, then he shall have a painful chastisement.

QUR'ÃN: *And there is life for you in the retaliation, O men of understanding, that you guard yourselves* (against evil) : This verse points to the philosophy of this legislation. It aims at removing a possible misunderstanding that – because Allãh has allowed remission and blood-money, and also because remission expands the circle of mercy and affection – remission is more in conformity with public weal and social good. The verse shows that, although remission is an alleviation based on mercy, common good and society's peace depend on the retaliation. The only guarantee of life is the law of retaliation, and not remission, blood-money, or any other thing. Man has to accept this fact, if he has understanding. "that you may guard yourselves" that is, from murder. It gives the basic of the law of retaliation.

The scholars have said that the verse, "and there is life for you in the retaliation," is one of the most eloquent in its clarity, and the most refined in rhetorics, in addition to its having many other fine literary points, like brevity – it has so few words and such a small number of total letters – fluency of style and clarity of composition. It combines the force of argument with beauty of meaning, the fineness of proof with clarity of result.

Before this verse was revealed, the Arabs were fond of some adages and maxims (on the subject of murder and retaliation), of whose rhetorics and fluency they were very proud. For example:

‘To kill some is to keep alive all’, and ‘To increase killing is to decrease killing’. And the most remarkable in their eyes was the sentence: ‘Killing stamps out killing.’ But when this verse was revealed all were forgotten. Some of its distinguishing points are as follows: The verse has fewer letters, and is easy to pronounce. “the retaliation” with definite article is a proper noun, while “life” is common noun – it shows that the resulting good is greater and more widespread than the retaliation. It explains the result in clear words and describes the real philosophy of the law, that is, the life. It unambiguously shows by what means the desired result can be obtained: Obviously, it is the retaliation that leads to life, and not the killing. (After all, many killings are done unjustly, and they do not lead to life, they are negation of life.) The word, “retaliation,” covers also other punishments besides killing, that is, the reprisal in the matter of injury, etc. – and such retributions too lead to the society’s life. The word conveys another extra meaning, as it shows that the retribution has resulted from unjust killing. (Compare it with their maxim, “Killing stamps out killing”, which does not give any idea that “killing” refers to any punishment.) Then there is an exhortation in this sentence, as it points to a life reserved for the people, which they are oblivious of; it behoove them to take hold of it as it really belongs to them; it is as if someone tells you: There is a property belonging to you with so-and-so, or in such and such a place. Lastly, the opening word of the verse, that is, “for you” makes it clear to the men of understanding that the law-giver only desires to protect their interest, and no benefit is ever to accrue to him.

These are a few of the fine points found in this verse. The scholars have mentioned some more points, which may be seen in the books of rhetorics. The fact is, the more deeply you look at this verse, the more dazzled you shall be by its brilliance and radiance; and the word of Allãh is the highest.

TRADITIONS

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said about the word of Allãh, *the free for the free:* “A free man shall not be killed for the slave; but he shall be

beaten a severe beating and be fined the blood-money of the slave. And if a man kills a woman, and the heirs of the slain (woman) want to kill him, they shall pay half of his blood-money to the man's heirs." (al-'Ayyãshī)

al-Ḥalabī narrates from aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.). He says: "I asked him about the word of Allãh, the Mighty, the Great: *but he who for-goes it, it shall be an expiation for him* (5:45) *;* he (the Imãm) said: 'His sins shall be expiated, as much as he forgives.' And I asked him about the word of Allãh, the Mighty, the Great: *but if any remission is made to anyone by his* (aggrieved) *brother, then* (the demand for the bloodwit) *should be made according to usage, and payment should be made to him in a good manner.* He said: 'He who has got the right (i.e. the aggrieved party) should not put his brother (i.e. the murderer) in difficulty, when he has made settlement with him concerning the blood-money; and he who has got the duty (of paying the blood-money) should not delay in its payment when he has ability to do so; and he should pay it to him in a good manner.' And I asked him about the word of Allãh, the Mighty, the Great: *so whoever exceeds the limit, he shall have a painful chastisement.* He said: 'It refers to a man who accepts blood-money or forgives, or makes compromise, then exceeds the limit (and kills the murderer) ; so he shall be killed as Allãh, the Mighty, the Great, has said.' " (*al-Kãfī*)

The author says: There are many traditions of the same meanings.

AN ACADEMIC ESSAY ON RETALIATION

Before the advent of Islam, and until this verse was revealed, the Arabs believed in requiting a murder with killing. But the retaliation had no defined limit. It all depended on the strength or weakness of the aggrieved party. Sometimes they killed a man for a man, and a woman for a woman – thus keeping a balance between the crime and its punishment. At other times they killed ten persons for one, a free man for a slave, a chief for and ordinary man. Many times a tribe destroyed

another just in retaliation of one man.

The Jews believed in retribution, as we see in chs. 21 and 22 of Genesis, and ch. 35 of Numbers. The Qur'ãn quotes it in these words: *And We prescribed to them in it that life is for life, and eye for eye, and nose for nose, and ear for ear and tooth for tooth, and* (that there is) *reprisal in wounds* (5:45).

The Christians reportedly recognize only remission and payment of blood-money in the matter of murder.

All societies and nations, with all their differences, believed in, and practised, retaliation by killing, in one way or the other; although they did not have any fixed code for it even upto the recent centuries.

Islam opted for a middle course between confirmation of retaliation and its negation. It prescribed retaliation but did not make it obligatory – it allowed remission and payment of blood-money. Then it laid the foundation of justice by prescribing equality between the murderer and the murdered, telling us that: *the free for the free, and the slave for the slave, and the female for the female.*

Objections have been laid against the law of retaliation in general, and the capital punishment, that is, retaliation by killing, in particular. The brunt of the argument is that nowadays the advanced nations do not recognize – or do not enforce – the law of capital punishment. Their objections may be summarized as follows:

1. Human nature disapproves the idea of a life for a life, when a man looks at this matter from the point of view of mercy and service to humanity.

2. The killing (i.e. the crime) had caused loss of one person; now the second killing (i.e. its punishment) would be a further loss, a loss upon loss.

3. Capital punishment is based on hard-heartedness and desire of revenge. These are not good traits; they should be eradicated from society through general training. Even a murderer should be punished through corrective measures; and it can easily be done through prison and hard labour, not capital punishment.

4. A criminal becomes criminal only because of psychology-cal sickness. He should be put into mental hospital for treatment.

5. Civil laws and penal codes follow the trends of society. As the society changes, so do the laws and codes. There is no reason why the law of capital punishment should continue to plague the civilization – even the advanced nations – for ever and ever. Society should make use of its manpower to the maximum possible extent. A criminal may be given a punishment, which would be as effective as killing – without putting him to death. He may be imprisoned for life, or for a long period. It would satisfy both demands – that of the society and that of the heirs of the slain.

These are the main objections against the law of retaliation with killing. The Qur'ãn has replied to all this criticism with one sentence : . . . *whoever slays a soul, unless it be for man-slaughter or for mischief in the land, it is as though he slew all men* (5:32), as the following explanation shows:

The laws, observed by members of a society, are laid down by men and based on a subjective approach – with a view to serve the interest of the society. But the general and basic cause (which brings them into being) is the human nature which has real existence, and which demands that its deficiencies be made up and its needs fulfilled. This nature, this real being, has nothing to do with the number of the men, nor is it related to the composite unit, that is, the society. Because society is a handiwork of human nature, while we are talking about the man himself, about his nature itself. This nature, this real being, makes no distinction between a single man and a thousand; all are human beings; and as far as the existence is concerned, one man and the whole humanity have got equal weight, equal value.

This really existing nature has equipped itself with powers and instruments to ward off harmful and destructive influences from itself, because it loves existence, and repels all things which could deprive it of life. It defends its existence, by all possible means. It does not stop at any thing, and is ready and willing to kill and destroy the attacker who endangers its existence. Nature tells man to kill whosoever wants to kill him (if he cannot be

repelled by any other means). And no one denies justifiability of such killing.

Look at these advanced and "civilized" nations. They have no hesitation in waging war in defense of their freedom, independence and national interest. What will they do if someone wanted to kill all their nationals? They think that supremacy of law is sacrosanct. They defend the rule of law, they try to preserve order in the society, by all possible means – even if it entailed killing some offenders. They protect their national interest – even by war, if nothing else works. They justify war for this reason in high-sounding phrases – the war which shakes the world to pieces and destroys the tilth and the generations. There is a never-ending race for armaments: A country sacrifices its progress to arm itself with some sophisticated military hardware; and then its adversaries try to acquire even more advanced arms. Ask them, "Why this mad race?" They will say, it is essential for their defense, for the safety of their society and civilization.

Now, society and civilization is only a handiwork of the nature. How is it that the nature allows massacres, mass destructions and wholesale killings just to save a handiwork of its, and does not allow it for its own protection and safety? How is it that it allows to kill someone who intends to kill but has not killed yet, but forbids killing the man who intended to kill and killed?

The nature has decreed that every action should have a reaction; *so he who has done an atom's weight of good shall see it; and he who has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it.* Now what type of nature is this which breaks its own law, violates its own decree, when it comes to giving death penalty to someone who has killed an innocent person?

Moreover, Islam does not accord any value, any weight to man, unless he is on the religion of monotheism. One man believing in the one and the only God is equal in the eyes of Islam to the whole human race. Therefore, whoever slays a believer, it is as though he slew all men – because he committed a sacrilege against the dignity of that believer. Likewise, whoever slays any person, it is as though he slew all men – looking at the reality of his existence. But so far as the civilized nations are concerned,

religion has no value in their eyes. If they had accorded as much value (if not more) to religion as they give to civilization, they would have defended the religion to the same extent at least.

Furthermore, Islam has brought the *sharī'ah* which is meant for the whole world – not for a particular country or a selected group only. Let us say that what the advanced nations have legislated is good for their society. But they have opted for this course after they have made sure that the general training of their people has been effective; that their governments are faithfully discharging their duties; that according to crime statistics, these well-trained nations are now totally averse to murder and violence; that as a result of this aversion, no one indulges in crimes of violence – except in extremely rare cases. And because it hap-pens so rarely, these nations have decided to punish murder in some ways other than death. Islam does not say that such training should not be given, or that if given it would not be effective. When that stage is reached, capital punishment may give way to remission – with the law of retaliation keeping its basic position unaltered. The relevant sentence in this verse points to this fact: *but if any remission is made to any one by his* (aggrieved) *brother, then* (the demand for the bloodwit) *should be made according to usage, and payment should be made to him in a good manner.* Clearly, the language used is that of moral training; and when a nation advances to a level where all take pride in forgiveness and remission, then they would not deviate from the path of remission to that of revenge.

But what about other nations? We know their moral status is not so high. We see the condition of these societies, and the extent of the moral decay of their people. In these places, the criminals are not afraid of prison or hard labour; they are immune to sermons and exhortations; they do not understand such abstract ideas as human rights, nor do they give any importance to them. And the facilities which they are provided with in prisons are far much better and much more comfortable than the wretched life they are accustomed to at home. The result? They do not care about social disgrace or penal sentence; they are afraid of neither prison nor

hard labour; beatings and floggings are just occupational hazards to them. That is why crime rates are going higher and higher in almost every country.

Suppose there is there an ideal society we have mentioned earlier; still the overwhelming majority of nations come into this second less ideal category. Therefore, the general and basic law could only be the retaliation with possibility of remission. After that, if the ethical standard of a nation improved and if it advanced gracefully on the path of moral perfection (and Islam spares no effort for moral upliftment of its people), it would automatically opt for remission. If on the other hand, it continued its downward slide, and remained ungrateful to Allãh's favours, then the law of retaliation would prevail – with possibility of remission even then.

Now, let us have a look at their objections:

The talk about mercy and kindness to human beings is all very good. But not every kindness is good, nor is every mercy a virtue. Showing mercy to a hardened criminal who has no regard for others' life and honour, is a loathsome offence against good law-abiding people. Indiscriminate application of mercy would disrupt the social system, destroy the humanity and nullify the virtues.

The same applies to their criticism concerning hard-heartedness and revenge. Avenging an oppressed from the oppressor – in pursuit of justice and truth – is not objectionable in any way; nor is the love of justice a thing to disparage. Moreover, death penalty has not been legislated for revenge only; it serves also to train general public in good character and to shut the door of mischief in the society.

The assertion that the crime of murder is a psychological disease which should be treated in mental hospitals, has provided an excuse – and what a good excuse it is! – to the criminals. It has contributed a lot in the growth of murder, indecency and other crimes of violence in the society. Why should a criminal refrain from making murder his hobby, when he knows that his urge of violence is but a psychological disease, and that it is an acceptable plea which would oblige the government to treat him with kindness and benevolence, arranging for his medication in hospitals?

Now, we come to the view that society should utilize all

available manpower, and as such should use the criminals in compulsory labour and other such work, by imprisoning them and cutting their access to the society. If these people really believe in what they say, if there is any truth in this sermon, then why do they forget it in those cases in which their legal system provides for capital punishment? We should not forget that there is in every civilized country provision for capital punishment for specified crimes. They give death penalty in those cases because they think those crimes to be extremely heinous and atrocious. But we have already explained that, in the eyes of nature, life of one man is as precious as that of the whole human race put together.

* * * * *

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ إِنْ تَرَكَ خَيْراً الْوَصِيَّةُ
لِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقّاً عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ ــ ١٨٠ . فَمَنْ بَدَّلَهُ
بَعْدَ مَا سَمِعَهُ فَإِنَّمَا إِثْمُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يُبَدِّلُونَهُ إِنَّ اللهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ـ ١٨١ .
فَمَنْ خَافَ مِنْ مُوصٍ جَنَفاً أَوْ إِثْماً فَأَصْلَحَ بَيْنَهُمْ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ
اللهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ــ ١٨٢ .

Bequest is prescribed for you when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth, for parents and near relatives, according to usage, a duty (incumbent) *upon those who guard* (against evil) (180). *Whoever then alters it after he has heard it, the sin of it then is only upon those who alter it; surely Allãh is Hearing, Knowing* (181) . *But he who fears an inclination* (to a wrong course) *or an act of disobedience on the part of the testator, and effects an agreement between the parties, there is no blame on him. Surely Allãh is Forgiving,. Merciful* (182) .

* * * * *

COMMENTARY

QUR'ÃN: *Bequest is prescribed for you when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth:* The language is that of an obligatory rule, because *al-kitãbah* (اَلكِتَابَةُ = to write; translated here as "prescribed") is used in the Qur'ãn always for definitely

obligatory laws. It is further strengthened by the word "a duty" coming at the end of the verse, because duty too is used, like writing and prescription, for compulsory orders. But the word "a duty" is qualified by "upon those who guard (against evil)"; this somewhat weakens the sense of obligatoriness; it would have been more appropriate, in case of obligatoriness, to say, 'a duty upon the believers'. In any case, it is said that the verse was later abrogated by the verse of inheritance. If so, then it would only be its "obligatoriness" which was abrogated, not its being liked, recommended. Perhaps, the phrase qualifying "a duty" was used for this very purpose.

al-Khayr (الخَيْرُ) is wealth; it probably denotes considerable wealth, not an insignificant amount. *al-Ma'rũf* (المَعْرُوفُ = known; common usage of good deed and favour).

QUR'ÃN: *Whoever then alters it after he has heard it, the sin of it then is only upon those who alter it:* The pronoun in "the sin of it" refers to the alteration; all the rest refer to the bequest according to usage; bequest is *a maṣdar* and is used both as masculine and feminine. (That is why the pronouns used in the verse are of masculine gender.) "upon those who alter it": Allãh did not say 'upon them', because the wording used clearly indicates the nature of sin, that is, alteration of a will; also it paves the way for the next verse.

QUR'ÃN: *But he who fears an inclination* (to a wrong course) *or an act of disobedience on the part of the testator, and effects an agreement between the parties, there is no blame on him: al-Janaf* (اَلجَنَفُ = inclination; deviation) ; it is said that it indicates outward inclination of the feet, and *al-ḥanaf* (اَلحَنَفُ) shows their inward inclination. In any case, it is used here to denote an inclination towards sin and disobedience, as it is followed by "or an act of disobedience". The verse branches out from the preceding one. Its meaning is as follows (and Allãh knows better) : The sin of alteration is only upon those who alter the bequest (which was made according to usage). Of course, if someone fears that the bequest of the testator is, or shall be, an act of disobedience or

inclined towards a wrong course, and then effects an agreement between the parties, free from error and sin, then there is no blame on him; because he has not changed a bequest made according to usage; rather he has altered only the wrong and sin found in it.

TRADITIONS

Muḥammad ibn Muslim says that he asked aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) whether a bequest was allowed in favour of an heir. The Imãm said: "Yes". Then he recited this verse, "Bequest is prescribed . . . if he leave behind wealth, for parents and near relatives . . ." (al-'Ayyãshī). This tradition is also narrated, with a slight change in wording, in *al-Kãfī* and *at-Tahdhīb.*

as- Sadiq (a.s.) narrates through his father from 'Ali (a.s.) that he said: "He who did not bequesth at the time of his death for those of his near relatives who were not his heirs, surely ended his deeds with disobedience." (al-'Ayyãshī)

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said about this verse: "(It is) a right which Allãh has given in the properties of men to the Master of this affair (i.e. to the Imãm)." The narrator says: "I said: 'Is there a prescribed limit for it?' He said: 'Yes'. I said: 'How much?' He said: 'Its lower limit is one-sixth; and the higher, one-third.' " (al-'Ayyãshī)

The author says: This theme has been narrated also by aṣ-Ṣadũq in his *al-Faqīh* from the same Imãm. It is a fine inference from this verse read in conjunction with the verse: *The Prophet has a greater claim on the believers than they have on themselves, and his wives are their mothers; and the possessors of relationship have the better claim in the ordinance of Allãh to inheritance, one with respect to another, than* (other) *believers, and* (than) *those who have fled* (their homes), *except that you do some good to your* awliyã'; *this is written in the Book* (33:6). This verse abrogated the system prevalent in early days of Islam by which *a "muhajir* brother" inherited from his *"ansar* brother" ; and initiated inheritance between the relatives; then it made an exception (from this rule of inheritance by relationship), and that was

about doing *some good to your* awliyã'[1]. Now Allãh has made the Prophet *al-waliyy* and his pure progeny *al-awliyã'* of the believers. And this exception of doing good to the *awliyã'* brings it within the jurisdiction of the verse under discussion: *Bequest . . . for parents and near relative.* And the Imãms are also the "near relatives" (of the Prophet). Understand it.

The Fifth or the Sixth Imãm said about the verse, *Bequest is prescribed for you . . .:* "It is abrogated. The verses of inheritance abrogated it." (al- 'Ayyãshī)

The author says: This tradition may be reconciled with the preceding ones if we say that it was only its obligatoriness which was abrogated; thus the order will continue as *al-mustaḥabb* (المُسْتَحَبُّ = liked, recommended) even after that.

Abũ Ja'far (a.s.) said about the verse, *But he who fears an inclination* (to a wrong course) *or an act of disobedience . . . :* "*al-Janaf* is inclination to the side of error without knowing that it is allowed (or not)." (*Majma'ul-bayãn*)

aṣ-Ṣãdiq (a.s.) said: "When a man has made his will, then it is not allowed to the executor to alter the bequest made; he should enforce it as (the testator) has bequeathed; except when (the testator) has made his will against the command of Allãh, and done injustice (to an heir). Then it is allowed to the executor to bring the will to the truth (i.e. the right course). Let us say, there is a man who has got some heirs; and he bequeaths all (his) property to some of the heirs, depriving the others. In such cases, it is allowed to the executor to bring the will to the right (course). And this is (the meaning of) the word of Allãh, *an inclination* (to a wrong course) *or an act of disobedience.* And *al-Janaf* is inclination to some of his heirs, leaving the others aside; and

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1. *al-Awliyã'* (اَلأَوْلِيَاءُ) is plural of *al-waliyy* (الوَلِيُّ), which has several meanings, important among them being: friend, guardian, relative, a person close to Allãh, and master. In the explanation given in the text, it has been taken to mean master and guardian. (tr.)

al-ithm (اَلإِثْمُ = sin**;** act of disobedience) is that he directs to build fire-temples, and to take intoxicant. Then the executor is allowed not to do any such thing." (*at-Tafsīr,* al-Qummī)

The author says: The explanation of *al-janaf* given in this tradition, makes clear the meaning of the word of Allãh: *and effects an agreement between the parties.* The words refer to effecting reconciliation and settlement between the heirs, when there is conflict and quarrel among them because the testator was inclined to wrong course, and favoured one heir at the cost of the others.

Muhammad ibn Sũqah said: "I asked Abu Ja'far (a.s.) about the word of Allãh: *Whoever then alters it after he has heard it, the sin of it then is only upon those who alter it.* He said: 'It has been abrogated by the next verse; *But he who fears an inclination* (to a wrong course) *or an act of disobedience on the part of the testator, and effects an agreement between the parties, there is no blame on him.'* He said: 'It means that if the executor fears that the testator is inclined to a wrong course concerning his children in the bequest he has entrusted the executor with, in a way Allãh is not pleased with, (and which is) against the truth, then there is no blame on him, (i.e. on the executor of the will) if he changes it to the truth, and to the way of right that Allãh is pleased with.' " (*al-Kãfī*)

The author says: This tradition explains one verse with the help of another. Therefore, the word, "abrogated", is not used here in its terminological meaning. And we have earlier mentioned that the word, "abrogation", is sometimes used in the speech of *Ahlu 'l-bayt,* in a meaning different from the language of the Principles of Jurisprudence.

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APPENDIX ‘A’

A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF THE FOURTEEN INFALLIBLES

THE HOLY PROPHET, HIS DAUGHTER AND THE TWELVE HOLY IMĀMS

NOTE: Where there are differences of opinion on the dates of birth or death, the most popular view has been quoted.

Sl. No.	Designation	Agnomen (*Kunyah*)	Name	Father's Name	Title (*Laqab*)	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Martyred by means of	Place of Burial
1.	The Last Prophet of Allāh	Abu 'l-Qāsim	Muḥammad (Aḥmad) (al-Muṣṭafā)	‘Abdullāh	Rasūlu'llāh, Nabiyyu'llāh, an-Nabiyy, Khātamu 'n-Nabiyyīn	17th Rabī‘ I, in the Year of the Elephant. (25. 8. 570 AD)	28th Ṣafar, 11 AH (25. 5. 632 AD)	Natural	Holy Medina, al-Munawwarah, Saudi Arabia.
2.	One of the Fourteen Infallibles	Umm Abīhā	Fāṭimah	Muḥammad	az-Zahrā', aṣ-Ṣiddīqah, al-Batūl, Sayyidatu 'n-Nisā'.	20th Jumādā II, in the fifth Year after the declaration of the Prophethood. (2. 1. 615 AD)	3rd Jumādā II, 11 AH (26. 8. 632)	Injured	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia.
3.	1st Imām	Abu 'l-Ḥasan, Abu 'l-Ḥasanayn, Abū Turāb.	‘Alī	Abū Ṭālib	Amīr al-Mu'minīn, al-Waṣiyy, al-Murtaḍā, (Ḥaydar).	13th Rajab, 10 Years before the declaration of the Prophethood. (25. 5. 600 AD)	Struck on 19th Ramaḍān (25th January); Died on 21st Ramaḍān 40 AH (27.1.661 AD)	Sword – while he was engaged in prayers.	Holy an-Najaf al-Ashraf, Iraq. (al-Ghariyy)
4.	2nd Imām	Abū Muḥammad	al-Ḥasan	‘Alī	al-Mujtabā, as-Sibṭ (al-Akbar)	15th Ramaḍān, 3 AH (1. 3. 625 AD)	7th Ṣafar, 50 AH (6. 3. 670 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia.
5.	3rd Imām	Abū ‘Abdillāh	al-Ḥusayn	‘Alī	Sayyidu 'sh-Shuhadā', as-Sibṭ (al-Asghar)	3rd Sha‘bān, 4 AH (8. 1. 626 AH)	10th Muḥarram, 61 AH (10. 10. 680 AD)	Sword – in the Battle of ‘Āshūrā	Holy Karbalā' (aṭ-Ṭaff), Iraq.
6.	4th Imām	Abū Muḥammad	‘Alī	al-Ḥusayn	Zaynu 'l-‘Ābidīn, Sayyidu 's-Sājidīn, as-Sajjād.	5th Sha‘bān, 38 AH (6. 1. 659 AD)	25th Muḥarram, 94/95 AH (31.10.712/20.10.713 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia.

7.	5th Imām	Abū Ja'far	Muḥammad	'Alī	al-Bāqir	3rd Ṣafar, 57 AH (16. 12. 676 AD)	7th Dhi 'l-ḥijjah, 114 AH (28. 1. 733 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia.
8.	6th Imām	Abū 'Abdillāh, Abū Mūsā.	Ja'far	Muḥammad	aṣ-Ṣādiq	17th Rabī' I, 83 AH (20. 4. 702 AD)	25th Shawwāl, 148 AH (14. 12. 765 AD)	Poison	Holy Medina, Saudi Arabia.
9.	7th Imām	Abu 'l-Ḥasan (*al-Awwal* = The First), Abū Ibrāhīm	Mūsā	Ja'far	al-Kāẓim, al-'Abd aṣ-Ṣāliḥ, al-'Ālim.	7th Ṣafar, 129 AH (28. 10. 746 AD)	25th Rajab, 183 AH (1. 9. 799 AD)	Poison	Holy al-Kāẓimi-yyah, Iraq.
10.	8th Imām	Abu 'l-Ḥasan (*ath-Thānī* = The Second)	'Alī	Mūsā	ar-Riḍā	11th Dhi 'l-qi'dah, 148 AH – (29.12.765 AD)	17th Ṣafar, 203 AH (24. 8. 818 AD)	Poison	Holy Mashhad, (Ṭūs - Khurāsān), Iran.
11.	9th Imām	Abū Ja'far (*ath-Thānī* = The Second)	Muḥammad	'Alī	at-Taqī, al-Jawād.	10th Rajab, 195 AH (8. 4. 811 AD)	30th Dhi 'l-qi'dah, 220 AH (25. 11. 835 AD)	Poison	Holy al-Kāẓimi-yyah, Iraq.
12.	10th Imām	Abu 'l-Ḥasan (*ath-Thālith* = The Third).	'Alī	Muḥammad	an-Naqī, al-Hādī.	2nd Rajab, 212 AH (27. 9. 827 AD)	3rd Rajab, 254 AH (28. 6. 868 AD)	Poison	Holy Sāmarrā' (Surra-man-ra'ā), Iraq.
13.	11th Imām	Abū Muḥammad	al-Ḥasan	'Alī	al-'Askarī	8th Rabī' II, 232 AH (3. 12. 846 AD)	8th Rabī' I, 260 AH (1. 1. 874 AD)	Poison	Holy Sāmarrā, Iraq.
14.	12th Imām	Abu 'l-Qāsim	Muḥammad	al-Ḥasan	al-Mahdī, al-Qā'im, al-Ḥujjah, al-Ghā'ib, Ṣāḥibu 'z-Zamān, Ṣāḥibu 'l-Amr, al-Muntaẓar.	15th Sha'bān, 255 AH (29. 7. 869 AD)	Still alive, but in occultation.	– –	– – – –

APPENDIX “B”

In this book the references of the Qur’ãnic verses have been given by writing serial number of the relevant chapter, followed by a colon (:) that is followed by the number/s of the verse/s. The names of the chapters have been omitted for the sake of brevity.

The names of the chapters with their serial numbers are given here for the guidance of the readers.

To find, for instance, the verse 5:67 in the Qur’ãn, the reader should open the fifth chapter, that its, *al-Mã'idah* (اَلمَآئِدة = The Table) and then find the 67th verse.

S. No.	Arabic Names of the Chapters	Transliteration	Meaning
1.	فاتِحَةُ الكِتاب	*Fatihatu 'l-kitãb*	The Opening of The Book
2.	البَقَرة	*al –Baqarah*	The Cow
3.	آل عِمران	*Ãl ‘Imrãn*	The House of Imran
4.	النِّســاء	*an-Nisã'*	Women
5.	المَـائِدة	*Al-Mã'idah*	The Table
6.	الأنْعـام	*Al –An‘ãm*	Cattle
7.	الأعراف	*al-A‘rãf*	The Battlements
8.	الأنْفـال	*al-Anfãl*	The Spoils
9.	التَّـوْبَة	*At-Tawbah*	Repentance
10.	يُونُس	*Yunus*	Jonah

S. No.	Arabic Names of the Chapters	Transliteration	Meaning
11.	هُود	*Hũd*	Hood
12.	يُوسُف	*Yũsuf*	Joseph
13.	الرَّعد	*ar-Ra'd*	Thunder
14.	اِبراهيم	*Ibrãhīm*	Abraham
15.	الحِجْر	*Al–Ḥijr*	El-Hijr
16.	النَّحل	*An-Naḥl*	The Bee
17.	الاِسْرآء	*al-Isrã'*	The Night Journey
18.	الكَهْف	*al-Kahf*	The Cave
19.	مَريَم	*Maryam*	Mary
20.	طه	*Ṭã Hã*	Ta Ha
21.	الأنْبِيآء	*al-Anbiyã'*	Prophets
22.	الحَجّ	*al-Ḥajj*	The Pilgrimage
23.	المؤمِنون	*al-Mu'minũn*	The Believers
24.	النّور	*an-Nũr*	Light
25.	الفُرقان	*al-Furqãn*	Discrimination (Salvation)
26.	الشُّعَراء	*ash-Shu'arã'*	The Poets
27.	النَّمْل	*an-Naml*	The Ant
28.	القَصَص	*al-Qaṣaṣ*	The Stories
29.	العَنْكَبُوت	*al-'Ankabũt*	The Spider
30.	الرُّوم	*Ar-Rũm*	The Greeks
31.	لُقمان	*Luqmãn*	Lokman
32.	السَّجْدة	*as-Sajdah*	Prostration
33.	الأحزاب	*al-Aḥzãb*	The Confederates
34.	سَبَأ	*Saba'*	Sheba
35.	فاطِر (المَلائِكة)	*Fãṭir (or, al-Malã'ikah)*	The Originator (or The Angels)
36.	يس	*Yã Sīn*	Ya Sin
37.	الصّافّات	*aṣ-Ṣãffãt*	The Rangers
38.	ص	*Ṣãd*	Sad

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39.	الزُّمَر	*az-Zumar*	The Companies
40.	المُؤْمِن	*al-Mu'min*	The Believer
41.	فُصِّلَت	*Fuṣṣilat*	Distinguished
42.	الشُّورى	*ash-Shũrã*	Counsel
43.	الزُّخْرُف	*az-Zukhruf*	Ornaments
44.	الدُّخان	*ad-Dukhãn*	Smoke
45.	الجاثِية	*al-Jãthiyah*	Hobbling
46.	الأحقاف	*al-Aḥqãf*	The Sand-Dunes
47.	مُحَمّد(ص)	*Muḥammad*	Muhammad
48.	الفَتْح	*al-Fatḥ*	Victory
49.	الحُجُرات	*al Ḥujurãt*	Apartments
50.	ق	*Qãf*	Qaf
51.	الذّاريات	*adh-Dhãriyãt*	The Scatterers
52.	الطُّور	*aṭ-Ṭũr*	The Mount
53.	النَّجْم	*an-Najm*	The Star
54.	القَمَر	*al-Qamar*	The Moon
55.	الرَّحمن	*ar-Raḥmãn*	The All-merciful
56.	الواقِعَة	*al-Wãqi'ah*	The Terror
57.	الحَديد	*al-Ḥadīd*	Iron
58.	المُجادَلة	*Al-Mujãdalah*	The Disputer
59.	الحَشْر	*al-Ḥashr*	The Mustering
60.	المُمتَحَنة	*al-Mumtaḥanah*	The Woman
61.	الصَّف	*aṣ-Ṣaff*	The Ranks
62.	الجُّمُعة	*al-Jumu'ah*	Congregation
63.	المُنافِقُون	*al-Munãfiqũn*	The Hypocrites
64.	التَّغابُن	*at-Taghãbun*	Mutual Fraud
65.	الطَّلاق	*aṭ-Ṭalãq*	Divorce
66,	التَّحْريم	*at-taḥrīm*	The Forbidding
67.	المُلْك	*al-Mulk*	The Kingdom

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68.	القَلَم	*al-Qalam*	The Pen
69.	الحَاقَة	*al-Ḥãqqah*	The Indubitable
70.	المَعارج	*al-Ma'ãrij*	The Stairways
71.	نُوح	*Nũḥ*	Noah
72.	الجِنّ	*Al-Jinn*	The Jinn
73.	المُزَّمِّل	*al-Muzzammil*	Enwrapped
74.	المُدَّثـِّر	*al-Muddaththir*	Shrouded
75.	القِيامَة	*al-Qiyãmah*	The Resurrection
76.	الدَّهر (الإنسان)	*ad-Dahr* (or, *al -Insãn)*	The Time (or, Man)
77.	المُرسَلات	*al-Mursalãt*	The Loosed Ones
78.	النَّبأ	*an-Naba'*	The Tiding
79.	النـّازعات	*an-Nãzi'ãt*	The Pluckers
80.	عَبَس	*'Abas*	He Frowned
81.	التـَّكوير	*at-Takwīr*	The Darkening
82.	الإنفِطار	*al-Infiṭãr*	The Splitting
83.	المُطـَفِّفين	*al-Muṭaffifīn*	The Stinters
84.	الإنشِقاق	al-Inshiqãq	The Rending
85.	البُروج	*al-Burũj*	The Constellations
86.	الطّارق	*aṭ-Ṭãriq*	The Night-star
87.	الأعلى	*Al-A'lã*	The Most High
88.	الغاشِيَة	*al-Ghãshiyah*	The Enveloper
89.	الفَجْر	*Al-Fajr*	The Dawn
90.	البَلـَد	*Al-Balad*	The Land
91.	الشـَّمْس	*ash-Shams*	The Sun
92.	اللـَّيل	*Al-Layl*	The Night
93.	الضُّحى	*aḍ-Ḍuḥã*	The Forenoon
94.	الإنشِراح	*al-Inshirãh*	The Expanding

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95.	التِّين	*At-Tīn*	The Fig
96.	العَلَق	*al-'laq*	The Blood-clot
97.	القَدر	*al -Qadr*	Power
98.	البَيِّنَة	*al -Bayyinah*	The Clear Sign
99.	الزِّلزال	*Az-Zilzãl*	The Earthquake
100.	العَاديات	*al-'Ãdiyãt*	The Chargers
101.	القارِعَة	*al-Qãri'ah*	The Clatterer
102.	التَكاثُر	*at-Takãthur*	Rivalry
103.	العَصْر	*Al-'Aṣr*	Afternoon
104.	الهُمَزَة	*al-Humazah*	The Backbiter
109.	الفيل	*Al-Fīl*	The Elephant
106.	قُرَيْش	*Quraysh*	Quraish
107.	الماعُون	*al-Mã'ũn*	Charity
108.	الكَوْثَر	*al-Kawthar*	Abũndance
109.	الكافِرون	*al-Kãfirũn*	The Unbelievers
110.	النَّصر	*An-Naṣr*	Help
111.	تَبَّت	*Tabbat* (or, *Lahab)*	Perish (or,The Flame)
112.	الإخْلاص (التَّوحيد)	*al Ikhlãṣ* (or, *at-Tawḥīd)*	Sincere Religion (or, Divine Unity)
113.	الفَلَق	*al-Falaq*	Daybreak
114.	النَّاس	*an-Nãs*	Men

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